# CITY HILIGHTS

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## Iran defence min, Revolutionary Guards Cdr killed

Iranian Defense Minister Amir Nasserzadeh and Revolutionary Guard ground forces commander Mohammad Pakbour were reportedly killed in the US-Israel attack targeting a meeting of senior officials in Tehran. The attack, which struck a high-level gathering in the capital, marks a significant escalation in tensions involving 'Israel' and Iran. Independent verification of the officials' deaths has not yet been confirmed.

## Iran Defence Council secy Ali Shamkhani killed

Ali Shamkhani, a longtime Iranian security official and secretary of Iran's Defense Council, was reported killed in US-Israeli airstrikes, marking the loss of a senior adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

# 'EPIC FURY' HITS IRAN

## IRAN-ISRAEL-US CONFLICT ESCALATES BEYOND BORDERS

## 51 students killed in missile strike on school in Iran's Minab

**WASHINGTON**

The United States on Saturday launched a massive military strike dubbed 'Operation Epic Fury', targeting key Iranian military targets just days after President Donald Trump gave Tehran 10 days to finalise the nuclear deal and warned that "bad things" would happen if it failed to comply with Washington's demands.

Hours after the US launched a "major combat' operation against Iranian military installations, US defense officials announced the name of the operation in a social media post that included an American flag emoji.

**Iran refused to renounce nuclear weapons: Trump**

Trump said that the military operation, which commenced on Friday (local time), comes after Iran has refused to renounce its nuclear weapons, which Tehran has consistently said that it is not pursuing. He also added that Washington will destroy the Islamic Republic's missile inventory and industry, as well as its navy.

**Attack on shool**

The spiralling US-Iran-Israel confrontation entered a darker phase after the death toll from an Israeli strike on a girls' primary school in Minab of Southern Iran has touched 51, as per government sources.

The tragedy unfolded amid widening hostilities following US strikes on Iran and coordinated Israeli operations across the country.

The strike on the school in Hormozgan province marks one of the deadliest single incidents involving civilians since the latest escalation in the war with Iran began.

According to Iranian state media, the school in Minab was struck during a wave of air raids carried out as Israel attacks Iran in coordination with Washington.

**Explosions across Tehran**

Explosions were reported across Tehran, hitting roughly 30 targets in the first wave, including leadership residences, intelligence centers, and reportedly even the Supreme Leader's office. The initial focus appears to be on Iran's leadership and security infrastructure, rather than solely military assets, although US officials claim military targets were hit. Washington's involvement marks a major shift.

- Burj Khalifa reportedly evacuated
- Iran-Pakistan border shut
- World's busiest airport in Dubai closed

The US is reportedly coordinating closely with Israel from the start, indicating a broader, more strategic campaign. Donald Trump's recent address urged Americans to support the Iranian people and warned the regime that continued oppression comes at a deadly cost, signaling regime change as a possible objective.

### STRIKE ON GIRLS' SCHOOL WILL 'NOT GO UNANSWERED': IRAN MIN

Iran Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi has said that the attack on a girls' elementary school in Minab, a city in Hormozgan province in southern Iran, will "not go unanswered." Speaking in remarks carried by the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), which said the strike killed 53 students, Araghchi described the victims as "innocent children."

## Trump calls on Iranians to overthrow regime

**WASHINGTON**

In a video address after the United States and Israel started bombing Iran, US President Donald Trump made clear the goal was destruction of the Islamic republic's military and toppling of the authorities in power since the 1979 revolution.

"We are going to destroy their missiles and raze their missile industry to the ground. It will be totally -- again -- obliterated. We're going to annihilate their navy," Trump said in the address from his Florida home posted to his Truth Social platform. He urged opponents of the Iranian authorities to rise up, saying "the hour of your freedom is at hand."

"When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take," Trump said, adding that this "will be probably your only chance for generations."

He also acknowledged that "the lives of courageous American heroes may be lost" in what the Pentagon dubbed "Operation Epic Fury."

## Iran's 'regime' must not gain nuclear arms: Netanyahu

**JERUSALEM**

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, in his first public statement after his nation launched Operation Lion's Roar, said that the "murderous terrorist regime" in Iran must not be allowed to gain nuclear arms. In the televised address, the Israeli PM confirmed that Israel, along with the US, had launched strikes against Iran.

"This murderous terrorist regime must not be allowed to arm itself with nuclear weapons that would enable it to threaten all of humanity," he said. "Together we will stand, together we will fight, and together we will ensure the eternity of Israel," he added. Netanyahu also urged Israeli citizens to follow civil defence instructions in the days ahead, saying the operation would require patience and resilience.Targets hit across Iran

Media reported that 30 locations were struck in the opening phase of the joint operation that is being called 'Operation Fury' by the US and 'Operation Lion's Roar' by Israel.

## India's DGCA sounds heigh alert

**NEW DELHI:** India's aviation regulator has issued a deep alert to airlines and airports amid escalating tensions in the Middle East, triggering precautionary measures across the country's civil aviation network. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has asked carriers to closely monitor the rapidly evolving security situation in the region and strictly adhere to international airspace advisories, as several West Asian countries impose restrictions or temporary closures of their skies following military developments. The advisory comes at a time when parts of the Middle East, a crucial transit corridor linking India to Europe, North America and Africa, are witnessing significant airspace curbs. These restrictions have forced airlines globally to reassess flight paths, leading to rerouting, longer flying times and possible delays. Indian carriers operating to destinations in the Gulf and beyond have been directed to continuously evaluate flight safety.

## Fresh blasts in Dubai as Iran attacks Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh

**New Delhi**

Iran on Saturday attacked the UAE's Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Qatar's Doha, and Saudi Arabia's Riyadh hours after Israel and the US conducted joint strikes on Iran, plunging the Middle East into a new conflict. A fresh wave of explosions in the Emirates' most populated city, as Iran struck locations across the Gulf. A first wave of explosions was heard earlier in the day.

The UAE's Ministry of Defence said a civilian of an Asian nationality was killed due to the "fall of some missile debris in a residential area" in Abu Dhabi. "Such acts constitute a dangerous escalation and a cowardly act that threatens the safety of civilians and undermines stability," it stated.

### 'India deeply concerned'

In light of escalating tensions in the Middle East, the Ministry of External affairs took out a statement saying, "India is deeply concerned at the recent developments in Iran and the Gulf region. "We urge all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation, and prioritise the safety of civilians. Dialogue and diplomacy should be pursued to de-escalate tensions and address underlying issues. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected."

### Oil markets brace for volatility

Global energy markets are set to see significant volatility following a US-Israel coordinated wave of military strikes across Iran. Oil prices have been creeping up for weeks as geopolitical tensions intensified, but the latest military action has send them even more higher. The attacks have brought the Strait of Hormuz into the conflict zone, creating concerns about potential disruptions to oil exports from the Middle East. Over 20% of the world's crude passes through this waterway.

### 'STAY INDOORS' INDIA ISSUES ADVISORY

**HELPLINE**

UAE : 800-46342
+971543090571
QATAR : 00974-55647502

**NORKA helpdesk**

+91-8802012345
+18004253939

### $128 bn wiped from crypto after strikes

Cryptocurrency markets tumbled after the US and Israel launched military strikes on targets in Iran, triggering a broad retreat from risk-sensitive assets. Bitcoin briefly fell 3.8% to $63,038 before recovering slightly to trade near $64,000 by 6 am in New York. Ether, the second-largest cryptocurrency by market value, dropped as much as 4.5% to $1,836. Data from CoinGecko shows that roughly $128 billion was wiped from the total digital asset market in the immediate aftermath.

## Global airlines ground flights

**Dubai:** Global airlines suspended and rerouted flights across large parts of the Middle East on Saturday following airstrikes by the US and Israel on Iran, heightening fears of a wider regional conflicts. Airlines are wary of potential dangers, including accidental or deliberate attacks on commercial planes, as well as longer flight times requiring extra fuel. Preliminary data from aviation analytics firm Cirium showed that nearly 40% of flights to Israel were cancelled on Saturday as airlines reacted swiftly to the deteriorating security environment. Across the broader Middle East region, about 6.7% of scheduled flights were scrapped, reflecting a significant, though uneven, operational impact. It affected both regional carriers and international airlines.

### DRONE STRIKES KUWAIT AIRPORT

A drone struck Kuwait's international airport on Saturday, the civil aviation authority said, causing minor injuries as Iran retaliated across the Gulf for US and Israeli strikes. "A drone targeted Kuwait International Airport, resulting in minor injuries to a number of employees, in addition to limited material damage to the passenger terminal," the authority said in a statement.

**EPSTEIN FILES**

## *I saw nothing and did nothing wrong: Clinton*

**WASHINGTON**

Former United States president Bill Clinton on Friday denied any wrongdoing while testifying to a congressional panel probing his links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Clinton, who features prominently in the Epstein files has insisted that he broke ties well before the disgraced billionaire's 2008 conviction for sex offences.

Clinton shared a video message on his deposition on X and said, "I saw nothing, and I did nothing wrong."

"The reason I was there is that the girls and women whose lives Jeffrey Epstein destroyed deserve not just justice, but healing. They've been waiting too long for both. Though my brief acquaintance with Epstein ended years before his crimes came to light. And though I never witnessed during our limited interactions any indication of what was truly going on," Clinton said on agreeing to testify before the probe panel. As per agencies, James Comer, the Republican chair of the House committee probing Epstein, termed the deposition "very productive". "President Clinton answered every question, or attempted to answer every question," he said. Clinton flew on Epstein's plane several times in the early 2000s after he left office and before Epstein's 2008 conviction of soliciting prostitution from a minor. A tranche of millions of documents released by the Justice Department includes photos of Clinton with women whose faces are redacted.

"I saw nothing, and I did nothing wrong," Clinton said. His testimony follows that of his wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who told the panel on Thursday that she did not remember ever meeting Epstein and had nothing to share about his sex crimes.

## 21 killed, 8 critical in cracker unit blast in AP's Kakinada

**VETLAPALEM**

At least 18 people are feared dead in a massive explosion at a firecracker unit in Vetlapalem village in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday.

The fire broke out on Saturday afternoon at the Surya Sri firework unit, which was located in agricultural fields between Vetlapalem and G Medapadu in Samarlakota Mandal. About 35 workers were present at the time of the accident.

The intensity of the explosion at Vetlakpalem village in Samarlakota mandal was so strong that the bodies were flung into nearby paddy fields, said a police official.

AP Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha said, "so far, we have information that 18 people were killed and six critically injured."

Kakinada Government General Hospital superintendent said the hospital received seven patients with burns ranging from 90 to 100%.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed sadness over a large number of cracker manufacturing workers losing their lives at Surya Fireworks, said an official release.

"The explosion at a crackers manufacturing unit at Vetlapalem village in Kakinada district has really pained me. Multiple people losing their lives in this accident is sad," Naidu stated in an X post.

## QUICK READ

### Airport Passengers Protest Stranded Flights

**Bengaluru**

Chaos erupted at Kempegowda International Airport as passengers bound for Kathmandu protested after their Air India Express flights were diverted or failed to land in Nepal for the second consecutive day due to adverse weather conditions and operational issues. Frustrated travellers staged demonstrations at the terminal, demanding clearer communication and better arrangements for accommodation and connections. Airline officials announced a "recovery flight" from Bengaluru to address the disruption, but many passengers were still grappling with delays, missed plans, and confusion over refund policies. Airport authorities are now coordinating with weather agencies to update schedules and minimize further disruption.

### Police Bust Drug Network in Cross-State Operation

**Bengaluru**

In a major drug enforcement action, Kerala police arrested a drug peddler in Bengaluru's Mylasandra area, seizing MDMA pills estimated to be worth over ₹1 crore. The suspect, identified as Diresh Kutum from Assam, was allegedly transporting the narcotics between Assam, Kerala, and Bengaluru, with the contraband hidden in infant food packs at his residence. The raid followed earlier arrests in Malappuram, where associates were detained along with 1 kg of MDMA. Senior police officials said the cross-state operation was based on credible intelligence and highlighted a broader uptick in drug trafficking networks involving multiple states.

### BDA Moves to Revive Malleswaram Market Complex

**Bengaluru**

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has launched a leasing process for commercial spaces at the long-delayed Malleswaram Market Complex in central Bengaluru. The tender calls for bidders to operate shops, restaurants, gyms, offices, and entertainment zones across the redeveloped site, which includes automated parking facilities. Of the ground-floor spaces, 192 are reserved for earlier vendors under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) distribution plan. The project, completed after legal and geological setbacks, aims to turn the complex into a vibrant commercial hub. Some vendors, however, express concerns over stall sizes and infrastructure readiness ahead of public opening.

# K'taka rolls out HPV vaccination for girl aged 14

The government aims to vaccinate 1.15 crore girls across the state in three months.

**BENGALURU**

In a major step toward strengthening girls' health and preventing cervical cancer, the State Government has launched a Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign across Karnataka.

The initiative follows the vision of the Central Government to prioritize preventive healthcare for adolescent girls and women. The national launch of the campaign was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at an event held in Ajmer, Rajasthan. The programme was viewed via webcast at KC General Hospital in Bengaluru, where senior health officials gathered to mark the occasion.

Among those present were the Director of Medical Education Dr. Sujatha Rathod, National Health Mission Managing Director Avinash Menon, the Dean of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, and the Director of Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, along with other senior officials.

Under the campaign, approximately 1.15 crore girls aged 14 years and above will receive the HPV vaccine. The vaccination will be administered at government healthcare facilities, including Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Primary Health Centres), Community Health Centres, sub-district and district hospitals, as well as government medical colleges and hospitals. The drive will be conducted over a three-month period, with authorities aiming to ensure comprehensive coverage of eligible beneficiaries.

The Health Department has also intensified awareness campaigns across the state to educate families about the importance of HPV vaccination in preventing cervical cancer. Cervical cancer remains one of the leading cancer-related illnesses among women, primarily caused by infection with the Human Papillomavirus.

Health officials described the vaccination programme as a significant milestone in safeguarding the long-term health of girls and women across the state. Senior authorities indicated that the campaign would be further expanded in the coming months to ensure wider outreach and sustained preventive healthcare efforts statewide.

# George promises 7-hr daytime power to farmers

**BENGALURU**

Karnataka Energy Minister KJ George reiterated the government's commitment to provide uninterrupted seven hours of daytime electricity to agricultural pump sets and said solarisation of farm feeders is being accelerated under the PM-KUSUM scheme.

Speaking after visiting the regional Congress office and receiving representations from party leaders and workers, the Minister said that under the KUSUM-C component, substations supplying power to agriculture are being solarised with a target of generating 2,500 MW of solar power.

Through feeder solarisation, we are ensuring seven hours of quality daytime supply to farmers. Under KUSUM-B, we are providing solar pump sets with up to 80 percent subsidy—the highest in the country. This is a transformative step by the Energy Department for the farm sector, he said.

George added that the department has been playing a pivotal role in the state's development by ensuring reliable power to households and farmers. He highlighted the Gruha Jyothi Scheme, under which up to 200 units of free electricity are provided to domestic consumers, benefiting around 1.65 crore families. We are leveraging every available opportunity to improve livelihoods, especially in rural areas, he noted.

Emphasising the benefits of integrating solar energy with agriculture, the Minister said the initiative is reducing the load on transformers and curbing power theft. He claimed that Karnataka has made steady progress in power generation while maintaining dependable transmission.

# Teachers can transform ordinary into extraordinary: CM

Siddaramaiah calls for scientific, rational education at teachers' mega conference in Bengaluru.

**BENGALURU**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said that only teachers have the power to transform ordinary individuals into extraordinary citizens and emphasized that the responsibility of building a better society must be reflected in the ongoing educational discourse.

He was speaking after inaugurating the State-Level Educational Mega Conference and Golden Jubilee Celebration organized by the Karnataka State Primary School Teachers' Association at Tripura Vasini, Palace Grounds in Bengaluru. Addressing a large gathering of educators from across the State, the Chief Minister described teachers as the true architects of the nation's future and underscored their pivotal role in shaping society.

Recalling India's journey since independence, he noted that the literacy rate, which stood at around 12 to 15 percent at the time of Independence, has now risen to approximately 74 percent. However, he stressed the need to examine

whether the education system is delivering quality education that effectively addresses societal challenges. He clarified that any shortcomings in educational transformation cannot be attributed to teachers alone, but rather to the deeply entrenched caste system and social inequalities that continue to affect progress. Highlighting the importance of scientific and rational education, Siddaramaiah said that the Constitution mandates the promotion of scientific temper and responsible citizenship.

As society continues to grapple with caste divisions, superstition, and regressive practices, he said education must play a transformative role in eliminating such barriers. The Chief Minister emphasized that meaningful change is possible only when inequality is eradicated and every section of society is brought into the mainstream. Economic and social freedom, he said, must be accessible to all citizens. Teachers, he added, are uniquely positioned to instill rational thinking and scientific outlook among students. Quoting Mahatma Gandhi, he said true development occurs when intellect, compassion, and skill come together. Expressing deep respect for primary and secondary school teachers, Siddaramaiah acknowledged that his own achievements were shaped by their guidance.

He urged teachers to uphold their constitutional duties, encouraging them to question, reason, and teach students to adopt the same approach.

Concluding his address, the Chief Minister assured that efforts would be made to fulfill the demands raised by the teachers' association.

# Teaching is a sacred profession: DKS

**BENGALURU**

Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar described the teaching profession as one of the most sacred callings and urged educators to shape students into history-makers with discipline and big dreams.

He was speaking at the State-Level Educational Mega Conference and Golden Jubilee celebrations organized by the Karnataka State Primary School Teachers' Association at the Palace Grounds in Bengaluru. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was also present on the occasion.

Addressing a large gathering of teachers, Shivakumar said educators are the builders of society and the true architects of the nation's future.

There is no greater joy for a teacher than seeing students rise to great heights in society, he said, emphasizing that the foundation laid in primary school remains with a child for life.

He stressed that teachers must prepare children to dream big and cultivate discipline, as discipline is essential for achieving great aspirations.

Quoting B. R. Ambedkar, he said that those who forget history cannot create history. He called upon teachers to inspire students to understand their past while equipping them with the knowledge and values required to shape the future. You must create children who will script history, he remarked.

Reflecting on the moral and cultural significance of teachers, Shivakumar said, The memory of a mother is the source of love, the memory of God is the source of devotion, and the memory of a guru is the source of knowledge. These three together form the foundation of humanity. He congratulated all those who had chosen teaching as their profession, describing it as a noble path of service.

The Deputy Chief Minister also acknowledged the support extended to teachers by Legislative Council members Puttanna and Ramoji Gowda.

He noted that more than one lakh teaching posts remain vacant across the state, adding that the government is aware of the issue.

He announced that a decision has been taken to fill 56,000 government posts.

Reiterating the government's commitment to improving rural education, Shivakumar assured that quality education must reach children in villages.

He further stated that the government is ready to allot land in Bengaluru for the teachers' association and affirmed that the government will always stand with the teaching community.

# Iran tensions disrupt flights, K'taka MLC stranded in Dubai

**BENGALURU**

Escalating tensions in the Middle East following reported strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran have led to widespread disruption of air travel, leaving Karnataka Legislative Council Member Bhojegowda stranded at Dubai International Airport along with his family.

According to available information, Bhojegowda had travelled from Bengaluru to Dubai with his family on a private visit. However, soon after their arrival, heightened security concerns and fears of further escalation in the region prompted authorities to temporarily suspend several flight operations at Dubai International Airport. The precautionary move was taken in view of the volatile situation in the Middle East, as multiple countries reviewed airspace safety and aviation advisories. As a result of the sudden suspension of flights, the MLC and his family have been unable to secure a return flight to Bengaluru. Sources indicate that they are currently waiting at the airport while exploring alternative travel options. Airline counters have reportedly witnessed heavy rushes, with many passengers seeking rebooking or rescheduling as services remain uncertain.

The disruption has not only affected Bhojegowda but also several other Indian passengers transiting through or departing from Dubai.

## II PU exam-1 begins, 4.93L students appear on Day 1

**BENGALURU**

The Second PUC Annual Examination-1 commenced across Karnataka, with the first day of exams being conducted smoothly and without major disruptions. According to the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board, a total of 4,93,132 students appeared for the Kannada and Arabic language examinations held statewide. The Board stated that 5,09,085 students had registered for the examination. Of these, 4,93,132 students were present on the first day, while 15,953 students remained absent. The overall attendance percentage stood at an impressive 96.87 percent, reflecting strong participation from students across districts.

In the Bengaluru divisions, 33,498 students appeared in Bengaluru North, while 41,703 students took the examination in Bengaluru South. In Bengaluru Rural, 9,458 students were present, and in Ramanagara district, 6,518 candidates wrote the exam. Other districts also reported steady participation, with 11,703 students appearing in Chitradurga and 14,708 in Shivamogga. Officials confirmed that the examinations were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, with adequate arrangements made at examination centres to ensure fairness and transparency.

GROWING DEMANDS

# *Special one-way train from SMVT to Mumbai on Mar 1*

**BENGALURU**

In view of increased passenger demand, the South Western Railway has announced the operation of a one-way special express train from Sir M. Visvesvaraya Terminal (SMVT) in Bengaluru to Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) in Mumbai on March 1.

Train No. 06541 SMVT Bengaluru–LTT One-Way Unreserved Special Express will depart from SMVT Bengaluru at 7.00 pm on Sunday (March 1) and is scheduled to arrive at LTT Mumbai at 11.30 pm on Monday. The special service has been introduced to manage the heavy rush of passengers travelling between Karnataka and Maharashtra.The train will halt at several major stations en route, including Chikkabanavara, Tumakuru, Arasikere, Birur, Davanagere, Harihar, SMM Haveri, SSS Hubballi, Dharwad, Londa, Belagavi, Ghataprabha, Miraj, Sangli, Karad, Satara, Pune, Lonavala and Kalyan. These stops are expected to benefit passengers from multiple districts seeking connectivity to Mumbai.

The special train will consist of a total of 19 coaches. Out of these, 15 will be general second-class coaches and two will be SLR (Seating-cum-Luggage Rake) coaches. Notably, two AC coaches attached to the train will remain locked and will not be available for passenger use. The train is entirely unreserved, meaning passengers can travel without prior seat reservation.

Tickets can be purchased through the 'RailOne' mobile application or directly at railway station ticket counters. Railway authorities have advised passengers to arrive early at stations due to anticipated crowding. The introduction of this special service is expected to significantly ease travel congestion during the peak travel period.

## DKS can become Karnataka CM only if it's in his destiny: DK Suresh

**BENGALURU**

Former Congress MP DK Suresh said his brother, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, could become Chief Minister "if it is in his destiny. If it is not, then nothing can be done." Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, Suresh downplayed speculation over leadership change and distanced himself from the ongoing discussions among legislators. Some Congress MLAs, loyal to Shivakumar, on Friday night held a meeting in a hotel and reportedly discussed ways to see their leader rise to the post of the chief minister. They planned a visit to Delhi to urge the High Command to make Shivakumar the next chief minister. "I have no information about that. You should ask the MLAs concerned," Suresh said. "That is their personal matter."The power tussle flared up in the State since November 2025 when the Congress government crossed the halfway mark of two-and-a-half years, amid reports about an alleged power-sharing agreement between CM Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar.

## QUICK READ

### Ballari to Host Marathon and Jayanti celebrations today

**Ballari**

The District Police Department will organize the "Ballari Police Run" marathon and walkathon today, March 1, at 7 am from DAR Police Grounds to raise public awareness on social issues. Later in the evening at 6.30 pm, the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and the Metropolitan Municipality will jointly host the Sri Jagadguru Renukacharya Jayanti at Dr. Joldarashi Doddanagouda Theatre Hall. A procession will begin at 4.30 pm from Municipal College Grounds to the theatre. Media representatives are invited to cover both events and participate in the celebrations.

### Second PU Kannada exam conducted smoothly in Ballari

**Ballari**

The second PUC examinations began across Ballari district on Saturday, with the Kannada Language exam successfully conducted. Out of 10,294 registered students, 9,884 appeared, while 410 students were absent. The exam was held at 20 centres, including 12 in Ballari city, three in Siraguppa, one in Kurugodu, two each in Sandur and Kampli. The Deputy Director of the Undergraduate Education Department confirmed that the examination proceeded smoothly without major disruptions. Authorities maintained strict supervision to ensure proper conduct, allowing students to complete the first-day Kannada paper under a well-organized schedule.

### Belagavi student dies of heart attack before exam

**Chikkodi**

A tragic incident struck Bambalvad village when 17-year-old Bhumika Malangi died of a sudden heart attack while preparing to write her second PUC exam. Bhumika suffered the attack after taking a bath and was rushed to a local hospital by her parents, but she passed away on the way. The incident has left her family and the village in deep mourning. The second PUC examinations began today and will continue until March 17, with 7.10 lakh students appearing across 1,217 centers statewide under strict supervision to ensure fairness and safety.

# Drug-free india campaign reaches schools

Over 7,000 students joined a walkathon from District Sports Complex to Sardar Maidan with MLA Asif Seth and officials.

**BELAGAVI**

Belagavi District In-charge Minister Satish Jarkiholi highlighted the growing threat of drug addiction infiltrating schools during the Drug-Free India, Drug-Free Karnataka, Drug-Free Campus Campaign held at the District Sports Complex. Organized under Swasth Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat and Youth Shuddhi Abhiyan, in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Dishabodh Foundation, and the Narcotics Control Bureau, the event stressed vigilance and proactive awareness.

Minister Jarkiholi warned that narcotic substances are being secretly mixed into snacks consumed by children, urging parents, teachers, and communities to remain alert. "Creating a drug-free Karnataka requires participation from every individual. Awareness must start at home and extend to colleges, friends, and families," he said.

The campaign included a walkathon beginning at the District Sports Complex, passing through Kollapur and Rani Channamma Circles, and concluding at Sardar Maidan, with over 7,000 students participating. The event was presided over by MLA Asif Seth, with Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, Kanti Shetty from Dishabodh Foundation, and several officials attending, including Zilla Panchayat Officer Rahul Shinde, Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan, and Director of Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences Dr. Ashok Kumar Shetty.

Vice-Chancellor Dr. Bhagavan B. C. emphasized the university's commitment to protecting its 3.5 lakh students across 1,500 affiliated institutions, issuing strict directives to ensure drug-free campuses. He noted that in the past year, drug addiction among students nationwide has risen by 63%, making sustained action critical.

District Commissioner Mohammad Roshan shared that law enforcement has seized nearly 700 kg of ganja in six months and called for vigilance in identifying at-risk youth, while Sri Sri Purnananda Bharati Swamiji of Sri Shivayogeeshwara Sadhu Samsthana Math urged extending awareness campaigns to villages, promoting addiction-free living and organ donation as acts of altruism.

The initiative reflects a collective effort to safeguard Karnataka's youth, emphasizing awareness, prevention, and community participation as keys to a healthier, drug-free society.

# NWKRTC 28th Foundation Day marks new milestones

**BELAGAVI**

**The event included Belagavi-1st unit renovations worth ₹1 crore, new software launch, and plans to procure 2,024 buses, including electric, AC, and sleeper coaches**

The North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation celebrated its 28th Foundation Day with a grand event in Belagavi, unveiling 250 new buses and honoring staff for exceptional service. Minister Ramalinga Reddy inaugurated the event, distributing silver medals to 68 accident-free drivers and appointment letters to 1,000 new employees.

Speaking at the event, Reddy highlighted the government's focus on strengthening public transport. "A total of 10,000 appointments have been made during our tenure. The cabinet will soon approve naming the NWKRTC after Kittur Rani Channamma, reflecting her legacy and pride," he said.

The event also marked the laying of the foundation stone for renovations of the Belagavi-1st unit, costing around ₹1 crore, and the launch of new software to improve operational efficiency. Plans are underway to purchase 2,000 new buses, including 100 electric vehicles for Belagavi city under the PM E-Bus Scheme. Additionally, 24 more buses, including 14 air-conditioned and 10 non-AC sleeper coaches, are being procured at a combined cost of ₹12 crore.

District in-charge Minister Satish Jarkiholi appreciated the bus allocations and urged further support, while Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar praised NWKRTC staff for their dedicated service, noting that no buses were purchased during the previous government. Belagavi North MLA Asif Seth emphasized the need for timely delivery of electric buses to meet the city's growing demand.

The ceremony also included the distribution of accident and life insurance compensation to families of deceased transport staff. Senior officials, including the Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase and ZP CEO Rahul Shinde, attended, highlighting the collaborative efforts behind NWKRTC's continued growth and public service.

*Basavaraj clarified no Delhi travel plans, affirmed DK Shivakumar's CM prospects, and stressed commitment to high command decisions*

# DK faction dinner sparks power-sharing speculation

**DAVANAGERE**

Around 40 MLAs from Congress's DK Shivakumar faction gathered for a dinner party yesterday, sparking speculation about internal power-sharing decisions, said Shivaganga Basavaraj. The dinner, held to celebrate MLA Balakrishna's birthday, was described as purely social, with no political agenda.

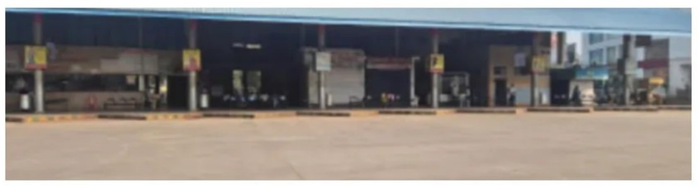
Speaking to the media, Basavaraj said there was no plan to travel to Delhi after the dinner. "If someone has personal work, they may go, but we will not," he clarified. On the question of a potential Chief Minister change, he stated that there is no setback in DK Shivakumar becoming CM, and the high command can decide at any moment. He emphasized that party members are committed to the high command's decision, not any individual like Siddaramaiah.

Basavaraj acknowledged public curiosity about leadership decisions: "When we go everywhere, people ask. The high command needs to clarify whether there is an agreement. They must resolve the confusion." He added that the environment is favorable for Congress to return to power in 2028, provided the current schemes and guarantees continue.

Regarding ministerial berths, Basavaraj mentioned that new MLAs have requested positions, which he supports, stressing the need to balance experience with fresh leadership. On the government's "five guarantees," he called them manageable despite the 52,000-crore commitment, affirming Congress's intent to uphold them.

On representation, Basavaraj urged that the Muslim community be prioritized in upcoming by-elections, citing previous successes in Shiggaon. He emphasized unity, saying both Muslims and Hindus must work together for the party's growth and the welfare of the state.

# Koppal-Bhagyanagar bandh shuts down town completely



**KOPPAL**

The Koppal-Bhagyanagar bandh witnessed a complete shutdown, as shops remained closed and roads were blocked in strong protest against environmentally harmful factories. The bandh received massive support from affected villagers, farmers, religious leaders, and public representatives, turning it into a powerful show of unity.

A protest march began from Gavisiddeshwara Mutt and passed through major parts of the city. Even the usually busy Koppal Central Bus Station wore a deserted look as transport services were hit.

Religious leaders including Panditaradhya Shivacharya Swamiji, Siddarameshwara Swamiji, and Siddhabasava Kabir Mahaswamiji addressed the gathering. They urged the government to listen to the pain of farmers and warned that public anger could grow if ignored. Swamijis reminded leaders that both politicians and religious heads survive on people's support and must stand with them.

Activists and leaders such as A.T. Ramaswamy and V.N. Rajashekar alleged that industrial pollution, especially fly ash, has reduced crop yield by 30 percent and harmed cattle. They criticized both state and central governments for remaining silent even after 117 days of protest.

MP K. Rajashekar Hitnal said leaders had met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah demanding closure of polluting factories. MLA K. Raghavendra Hitnal and former MP Sanganna Karadi also spoke, calling for continued peaceful struggle.

Speakers emphasized that the movement is beyond party lines and represents people's fight for clean air, water, and survival. Protesters declared that the agitation will continue until justice is delivered and harmful industries are addressed.

# Davangere ranks high in tax collection

**DAVANGERE**

Davangere Zilla Panchayat has collected ₹23 crore in taxes from gram panchayats, placing the district among the top five in the state for tax recovery.

Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Madhav Gitte Vitthal Rao said officials launched special awareness drives and door-to-door campaigns to recover long-pending dues. In just one week, ₹6 crore was collected, marking significant progress.

He stated that 70 percent of the total tax demand has been recovered, while 30 percent remains pending. Authorities aim to collect the remaining amount by the end of March and reach close to 100 percent recovery. A five percent discount announced for March is expected to encourage more residents to clear their dues.

Officials noted that less than 10 percent of people visit gram panchayat offices voluntarily to pay taxes. Staff often face resistance during door-to-door collection, with residents citing various reasons for delay.

Several challenges have slowed tax recovery. These include irregular property records, properties registered in the names of deceased persons, lack of property division among families, and limited awareness about tax responsibilities. Farmers facing low crop prices have also struggled to make payments.

The CEO said monthly tax collection drives and field visits across nearly 400 villages have strengthened the process. With consistent efforts, the district expects to cross 75 to 80 percent recovery soon and maintain its position among the state's leading districts in tax collection performance.

# Protest enters 120th day, Bengaluru march planned

**KOPPAL**

The protest against the proposed Baldota expansion entered its 120th day in Koppal, with activists announcing plans to intensify the agitation during the upcoming Assembly session. The sit-in, organized by the Koppal District Bachao Andolan and the Environmental Protection Forum's Joint Action Committee, is being held at a tent near the Municipal Council office.

Youth leader Ganesha Hatti of Bhagyanagar accused the government of ignoring public health concerns. He criticized Industries Minister M.B. Patil for stating that he would visit Koppal to convince residents. "If the minister is confident, let him establish the factory in his own constituency. These tactics will not work here," he said.

Leaders announced that from March 6, during the legislative session, protesters will stage a demonstration at Freedom Park in Bengaluru to draw statewide attention. Supporting the move, activist Saroja Bakale thanked residents of Koppal and Bhagyanagar for making the February 24 bandh successful. Singer Sadashiva Patil expressed solidarity and distributed bananas to the satyagrahis.

Several prominent citizens, including retired principal B.G. Karigara, conveners Mallikarjuna B. Gonal and Manjunath G. Gondabal, Prof. Dr. Basavaraja Pujara, and other community leaders, participated in the dharna. Protesters vowed to continue their fight, demanding that the government halt the project and safeguard public health and the environment.

**BELAVADI CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA**

# *Veerarani Belavadi Mallamma festival opens with grand procession*

**BELAGAVI**

The two-day Veerarani Belavadi Mallamma Festival commenced in Belavadi village of Bailahongal taluk with a grand procession that drew thousands of residents from surrounding areas. The festival celebrates the legacy of Veer Rani Belavadi Mallamma and her valor, and the opening was marked by vibrant cultural displays and enthusiastic public participation.

Veerajyothi, traveling from Sonda near Sirsi, the birthplace of Veer Rani Belavadi Mallamma, was welcomed at Mallammaji Circle by MLA Mahantesh Kaujalagi and other dignitaries. The festival flag was hoisted to officially inaugurate the event. The procession featured performances including dollu and horse dances, puppet shows, Veeragase, folk instruments, nagari playing, and Kathakali troupes. Hundreds of women carried kumbhas, adding to the visual splendor.

Dignitaries garlanded and paid homage to the statue of Belavadi Mallamma, including MLA Mahantesh Kaujalagi, District Commissioner Mohammed Roshan, Jagadguru Basava Jayamruthyunjaya Swamiji of Lingayat Panchamasali Peeth, former MLA Dr. Vishwanath Patil, and others. IPS probationary officer Dr. Bhanuprakash J, SDM Praveen Jain, Tahsildar Hanumantha Shirahatti, and officials from the Kannada and Culture Department were also present.

The evening will feature an inauguration ceremony followed by cultural programs. The festival brings together villagers and tourists, creating a festive atmosphere that celebrates heritage, valor, and community spirit.

# Kalika Habba brings joyful learning hope

**SHIRAHATTI**

The Chhabbi Cluster-level FLN Kalika Habba was held at the Government Lower Primary School in Guddadapura, offering a special platform for children who are behind in learning to grow with confidence and joy.

The festival focused on motivation, joyful learning and talent discovery among students with learning difficulties. Inaugurating the event, Block Education Officer H. Nanaki Nayak described Kalika Habba as a beacon of hope for such children. He said the festival's creative and educational activities help strengthen basic learning skills and encourage children to take part actively.

District Deputy Director (Development) G.M. Vadamani said the FLN Learning Festival is an innovative step by the government to bring backward children into the mainstream. He noted that joyful activities not only improve understanding but also help uncover hidden talents.

Diet Lecturer H.B. Ruddera highlighted that each child learns differently. He said the main aim of the program is to create interest in studies through creative and enjoyable methods, especially for those who struggle in regular classrooms.

Cluster Resource Person Geetha Saravi delivered the introductory speech and explained the purpose of the gathering.

Several officials, SDMC members, teachers and community leaders attended the program, showing strong local support for inclusive education. The festival featured competitions, creative tasks and learning exhibitions designed to build self-confidence. Organisers said the initiative plays an important role in helping children overcome fear of studies and move forward with renewed enthusiasm and equal opportunities.

# Ivan D'Souza questions MLA Vedavyas Kamath on Gudali Puja funding

D'Souza urged MLAs to focus on development grants, inclusive planning, and criticized underutilized projects like Gujjar and Moily Lakes

**MANGALURU**

Legislative Council member Ivan D'Souza questioned MLA Vedavyas Kamath of Mangaluru South regarding the source of funds for the Gudali Puja, amidst claims that the state government is not releasing development funds. Speaking at a press conference, D'Souza stated that allegations against the government are baseless.

He highlighted that Rs 165 crore has been allocated for Phase 2 of the Mahatma Gandhi Nagar Vikas Yojana (2024–27) for infrastructure development in Mangaluru. Additionally, Rs 14.26 crore has been deposited from the Smart City project for constructing wet wells, and eight drainage works worth Rs 316.49 crore are underway under the Asian Development Bank Amrit project, implemented by KUDFC.

D'Souza emphasized that the state government is actively providing grants for development, including tourism and IT park initiatives. He urged MLAs, including Kamath, to involve all representatives in planning and implementing works rather than making political statements. He criticized the lack of progress on housing and pointed out that projects like Gujjar Lake, though developed, remain underutilized, and Moily Lake has seen no improvement.

The press conference was attended by Mamata Gatti (Geru Development Corporation Chairperson), former Mayor Shashidhar Hegde, and local leaders Vinish Ballal, Nagendra Kumar, Hitesh, Manuraj, Bhaskar Rao, Prakash Salyan, and Amrit Kadri.

## QUICK READ

### Five attacked, robbed by gang in Ullal

**Ullal**

A gang allegedly attacked five people over a trivial matter near Mastikatte under Ullal police limits on February 27. The victims were identified as Ziyad Ibrahim, Junaid, Mohammed Ishan, Ibrahim Astar, and Mohammed Nizam. The accused, including Rizwan Kodaje, Afrid Asaigoli, and Neechu, reportedly assaulted the victims with weapons and abusive threats. During the attack, the gang allegedly stole a car, an iPhone, and ₹32,000 in cash. Junaid sustained injuries and was admitted to a private hospital. Ullal police have registered a case and begun investigations into the incident.

### Private bus catches fire near Hulikal; Passengers safe

**Kundapur**

A private Sri Durgamba Bus caught fire on Saturday afternoon near Hulikal Balebar Ghat while travelling from Kundapur to Shivamogga. The bus, carrying over 35 passengers, developed flames at the front. Thanks to the quick response of the driver and conductor, all passengers were safely evacuated before the fire spread. The vehicle was completely destroyed within minutes. Locals captured the incident on social media, highlighting the severity of the blaze. No casualties were reported, and authorities are investigating the cause of the fire.

*Yogish Shetty Jeppu said inadequate sewage in multi-storey buildings causes waterlogging, foul smells, health risks, and infections near the hospital and rickshaw park*

# Protest demands action against sewage problem

**DERALAKATTE**

Residents and local leaders held a protest on Friday near the Rickshaw Park by Deralakatte Private Hospital, demanding immediate removal of standing sewage water that is affecting public health. The protest was organized by Tulu Nad Rakshana Vedike and the Auto Rickshaw Drivers' Unit.

Founding president Yogish Shetty Jeppu said multi-storey buildings in the area lack proper sewage connections, causing water to accumulate near the hospital and rickshaw park. The foul smell from the sewage is creating health risks, spreading infections, and affecting nearby residents and visitors.

Prashanth Bhat Kadaba and other leaders demanded urgent action from the authorities to eliminate the sewage and implement proper drainage for the buildings. Community leaders, including Cletus Lobo Alake and Rakshit Kudupu, and several rickshaw drivers participated, urging the concerned departments to take responsibility and prevent further health hazards in the area.

# Students must have clear goals and determination: Prakash Khandre

**BIDAR**

Former MLA and founder of Guruprosanna Janaseva Mahila Samsthe Prakash Khandre called upon students to cultivate clear goals and strong determination in life, drawing inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's message of perseverance until the goal is achieved.

He was speaking after presiding over a felicitation programme organised at Guruprosanna Degree College in the town on Friday to honour B.Sc. student Maheshwari Sheelavant for her outstanding academic achievement. Khandre expressed pride that Maheshwari, a student of the institution's B.Sc. department, secured the top rank at Gulbarga University and won two gold medals, bringing recognition to border district Bidar at the state level. He noted that due to financial difficulties, Maheshwari was unable to continue her education after PUC. At that crucial juncture, Guruprosanna Educational Institution stepped forward and offered her B.Sc. education at a minimal fee. Making the most of the opportunity, she studied with dedication under the guidance of lecturers and emerged as a university topper, he said.

**Khandre praised Maheshwari Sheelavant, Gulbarga University B.Sc. topper with two gold medals, highlighting Guruprosanna College's support and her dedication despite financial difficulties**

Her achievement should serve as an inspiration to other students, he added. "Everyone has talent. It must be brought out through education. Students should set definite goals and strive for academic excellence to remove the tag of backwardness from Bidar district," he remarked. Ashwin Bhosale, Administrator of Diamond Educational Institution, said Maheshwari has proved that poverty is no barrier to achievement. Speaking after receiving the felicitation, Maheshwari advised students not to miss classes under any circumstances and to clearly understand lessons taught by lecturers. She said regular revision at home of topics taught in class would help students secure good marks in examinations.

B.Sc. Principal Vishnuvardhan Kote delivered the introductory remarks. Institution President Umadevi Prakash Khandre presided over the programme. Among those present were Working President Guruprosad Khandre, Taluk Journalists' Association President Jayaraj Dabashette, senior journalist Ganapati Bochare, parents Mangala Shivakumar Sheelavant and Mahadevi Sheelavant, Administrator Balaraj Shivanage, Raju Metre, Satish Biradar, Jashika Joy and others. Ankita and Sanjana rendered the welcome song, Mahesh Tegampure welcomed the gathering, Revanasiddayya Swami compered the programme, and Daivashala Biradar proposed the vote of thanks.

# Students should develop scientific temper: Mohan Reddy

**BHALKI**

Students must cultivate a scientific temper and actively engage in new research and innovations, said Administrative Officer Mohan Reddy.

He was speaking at the National Science Day celebration organized at Shri Channabasaveshwar Gurukul Residential Primary and High School in Karadyal village of Bhalki taluk. Addressing the students, he emphasized that they should develop interest in science by understanding the scientific principles behind everyday activities. "When students begin to question and analyze the science involved in daily life, it naturally builds curiosity and strengthens their foundation in the subject," he said.

On the occasion, students drew various science-related themes in rangoli, which attracted appreciation from the gathering. High School Headmaster Mahesh Maharaj, Science Department Head Omkar Harakude, Rajendra Patil, Sunita Taranalle, Mallikarjun Chalakapure, Shivanand Navalagimath, Sangeeta, Uttam Nagure, Mohan and others were present during the programme.

# Young BRIMS lab technician attempts suicide over salary harassment

**BIDAR**

A young woman working as a lab technician at BRIMS Hospital in Bidar attempted suicide on Friday evening, citing mental harassment over non-payment of her salary. The technician, employed at the hospital for seven years, alleged that she had been harassed for the past 11 months without receiving her wages. She reportedly consumed pills in an attempt to end her life and is currently receiving treatment at BRIMS Hospital.

The woman's mother stated that the family has faced severe financial difficulties since her husband's death four months ago, leaving her daughter as the sole provider. She also accused hospital staff of threatening and intimidating her daughter whenever she inquired about pending payments.

Following the incident, Minister Rahim Khan visited the hospital on Saturday to console the young woman and assured immediate action. He instructed the BRIMS administration to release her pending salary without delay and directed the police to register a case against those involved in harassment. The minister also highlighted threats made via social media by a YouTuber who allegedly pressured the victim.

Officials reminded the public that the state government's helpline 104 and Tele-MANAS (14416) are available for mental health support and suicide prevention. Authorities emphasized the importance of protecting employees from harassment and ensuring timely salary payments.

# Consultative meeting calls for drug- and begging-free Bidar

**BIDAR**

The Bidar Nagarika Sanmarga Samiti has resolved to work towards making the district free from substance abuse, begging, and social hatred, said its president Dr. Abdul Khadeer.He was speaking at a consultative meeting of organizations and prominent members of society on controlling social evils, organized by the committee at the District Kannada Bhavan in the city.

Dr. Khadeer said that, under the guidance of senior citizens, the committee has decided to form youth committees in every village of the district to combat social vices. He described gutka, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, excessive mobile phone usage, and begging as growing social menaces.

"Youth are the wealth of the nation. However, due to narcotics and mobile addiction, many youngsters between 25 and 30 years of age are facing health problems. They are wasting money, ruining their future, and becoming a burden on their families," he said, expressing concern. He added that if youth become unhealthy, the nation becomes weak, and emphasized that society as a whole has the responsibility to free young people from harmful habits and build a strong country. The committee aims to curb social evils and promote love, trust, and brotherhood in society, he said, adding that awareness campaigns against addictions are being conducted across the district.

Honorary President of the Backward Classes Federation Basavaraj Malge said that if all sections of society join hands, Bidar can become free from addiction and begging in the coming days. Committee Secretary Ashok Wadgave noted that harmful habits are detrimental to both individual and societal progress and must be controlled. Kannada Sahitya Parishat District President Suresh Chanashetti termed the campaign a positive step towards building a healthy society.

Several participants suggested distributing pamphlets and conducting door-to-door awareness drives to educate people about the ill effects of addiction. Among those present were Backward Classes Federation President Dr. Rajashekar Sedankar, Abdul Mannan Seth, Hawashetti Patil, Sharanappa Mithare, and other prominent members of the community.

### Petition Submitted to Yadgir SP seeking withdrawal of case against Mallikarjuna

**YADGIR**

Several seers (mathadhipathis) and devotees have submitted a petition to the Superintendent of Police in Yadgir seeking cancellation of a case registered against Mallikarjuna Muthya, alleging that it was filed without proper verification. The delegation met Yadgir Superintendent of Police Prithvi Shankar at the SP office in Yadgir city and urged him to review the matter. In their petition, they claimed that the case was registered against Mallikarjuna Muthya without conducting a thorough inquiry and demanded its immediate withdrawal. The petitioners stated that the case has hurt the sentiments of devotees and followers. They warned that if the case is not cancelled at the earliest, a massive protest will be launched across the Kalyana Karnataka region. The SP assured the delegation that the matter would be examined as per law.

# Adani Foundation gives scholarships to 790 students

**PADUBIDRI**

In a heartening effort to support education, Adani Foundation, along with Adani Power Limited, distributed scholarships worth ₹25 lakhs to 790 bright students from 12 Gram Panchayats under the Ellur Village Power Plant project area. The event was held at Buntara Bhavan Auditorium in Padubidri on Saturday.

Kishore Alva, Chairman and Managing Director of Adani Group, addressed the students and emphasized that education is the strongest foundation for personal growth and community development. He encouraged the students to embrace digital and technical skills, highlighting the importance of being prepared for the fast-changing world. "Learning new technologies and skills will help you succeed in the future," he said.

Fr. Francis Xavier Gomes, a respected educationist and retired principal of St. Philomena's College, Puttur, inaugurated the program. He praised the students' efforts and said such initiatives motivate young minds to dream big.

The foundation also provides educational kits to about 8,000 government school students every year, supporting children from economically weaker families. The program saw the participation of local representatives, including Surekha from Tenka Gram, Janardhan Acharya from Mazur Gram, and Reshma Mendon from Hejamadi Gram, among others.

Ravi R. Jere, AGM of Adani Power Limited, welcomed the gathering, while Deviprasad Bellibettu compered and proposed the vote of thanks. The event highlighted the foundation's ongoing commitment to education and community development.

# Free health camp benefits poor in Gangavathi

**GANGAVATHI**

A free health check-up camp was held on Saturday in Irakallagada village of Gangavathi assembly constituency, organized jointly by KFIL Rural Development Trust Bevinahalli, Kalyana State Defence Service Organization Koppal, Rotary Club of Rice Bowl Gangavathi, Saptagiri Hospital Bangalore, and the Primary Health Center Irakallagada. Businessman Maruti Thotaganti said the camp is a great help for poor laborers, raising awareness about health and encouraging people to get checked without hesitation. Former Zilla Panchayat member Manjunath, local leaders Ramanna Chaudki, Manjunath Irakalgad, and other dignitaries attended, supporting the initiative to promote community well-being.

**LOCAL AMENITIES DRIVE**

# *Gudali puja held for community hall*

**BIDAR**

A gudali puja was performed for the construction of Basaveshwara's community hall at a cost of ₹30 lakh in Bemalkheda village of Bidar South constituency.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Shailendra Beldale said the comprehensive development of the constituency is his main goal. He stressed that providing basic amenities from rural areas to cities remains his top priority.

The MLA said special attention is being given to roads, drinking water, education, healthcare and community halls. He noted that the new hall will serve as a common space for village meetings, social gatherings and religious programs, benefiting the entire community.

Dr. Beldale instructed contractors to ensure quality construction and complete the project within the stipulated time. He said such infrastructure is essential for village progress and added that responding to people's needs is his foremost responsibility.

He further stated that development of all sections of society is his mission. Efforts are being made to effectively implement government schemes aimed at women's empowerment, farmer welfare and support for economically weaker sections.

Emphasising public participation, he said development is not possible without cooperation from citizens. He expressed his resolve to make the constituency a model region through transparent and people-friendly governance.

Appealing to residents, he urged everyone to join hands and move forward together on the path of development to build a prosperous and progressive society.

Several local leaders and community members were present at the event, showing strong support for the initiative.

## QUICK READ

### Jagruta run 2.0 promotes drug-free youth

**Chitradurga**

The District Police Department will organize a 5K marathon titled "Jagruta Run 2.0" on March 1 to encourage youth to stay away from drugs and adopt healthy lifestyles. The run will begin at 7 am from DAR Maidan and pass through major city circles before ending at the same venue. Participants are urged to take up ac-tivities like walking, running, yoga, and exercise. Cash prizes of ₹5,000, ₹3,000, and ₹2,000 will be awarded to the top three winners, along with medals and cer-tificates. Refreshments will be provided to all runners, officials said.

### Tragic drowning of two students in Gadag

**Gadag**

Two 15-year-old students of Mulgund High School, Basavaraj Badiger and Para-shuram Vadder, drowned while swimming on the outskirts of Mulgund in Gadag taluk. The boys, who stayed at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Pre-Matric Boys' Hostel, went swimming in a large pit with four friends after school. Two of the six students, unable to swim, drowned. Swimming experts and fire brigade personnel are conducting search operations. The police visited the site and have registered a case at Mulgund police station. The incident is under investigation.

# Bommai predicts K'taka Congress wrestling finale

Bommai warned the public may act against the government, criticizing leaders' travel and highlighting the party's governance failures

**HAVERI**

Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai has predicted that the ongoing political struggle in Karnataka will reach its final stage after the state budget. Speaking to the media in Haveri, he said the situation in the Congress government has become critical, and there is little room for negotiation.

"The people have completely lost trust in this government," Bommai said. "Citi-zens are eagerly waiting for a change. Even MLAs are feeling the pressure, worry-ing that the uncertain atmosphere may affect their chances in future elections. Some are traveling abroad, while others are staying in resorts. The Congress high command seems powerless to manage the situation."

Bommai indicated that, in the coming days, the public will take action to remove the government, regardless of whether leaders go to Delhi or abroad. He suggest-ed that this political turmoil reflects poorly on the party's ability to govern effec-tively.

He also commented on the recent tragic incident in Shivamogga, where a minor boy was murdered. Bommai expressed deep concern and pointed out the possible influence of early drug use, noting that ganja consumption among schoolchildren has become a serious issue in Karnataka. "If children are exposed to drugs and communal tensions at such a young age, how can society progress?" he asked.

Bommai accused the Congress government of failing not only in maintaining law and order but also in preserving social harmony. "Sitting in power merely to fight for positions will not help society move forward. The state requires a government that can protect citizens and maintain peace," he added.

As the budget approaches, political observers are closely watching developments, anticipating how the unfolding crisis within the state Congress could shape Karna-taka's future governance.

# Bamul dairy turns profitable under Suresh; New facility inaugurated

**RAMANAGAR**

**Suresh stressed prioritizing farmers, noting Bamul engages 1.8 lakh farmers and employees, ensuring fair milk prices and high-quality supply, emphasizing farmers' central role in cooperative success**

Bamul, the Bangalore Milk Union, has shifted from losses to profit, with a report-ed monthly profit of ₹20 crore in January, said D.K. Suresh, during the inaugura-tion of a new dairy building in Hagalahalli. The union, which previously faced a monthly loss of about ₹14.5 crore, has now turned profitable after a series of strategic reforms.

Suresh emphasized the importance of farmers in this transformation. "We cannot provide benefits to employees unless the farmers are prioritized. Without farm-ers, there is no work," he said. He highlighted that 1.8 lakh farmers and employ-ees are actively engaged with Bamul, and the cooperative is focused on fair prices for milk producers while ensuring high-quality milk reaches the market.

Digital technology has been implemented to improve transparency, with online milk measurement and quality inspection, along with a trial app for monitoring. Suresh said the cooperative is also enhancing cattle breeding practices, including semen production to prevent infertility in heifers, aiming for higher milk yields and promotion of original high-yield breeds.

He noted that thousands of unemployed individuals have joined Bamul, contrib-uting to operations, while stressing that agriculture, particularly milk and silk pro-duction, remains a vital livelihood source.

Legislators including Iqbal Hussain praised Suresh for his work in improving irriga-tion infrastructure, noting that projects like the Kalegowda Doddi Etha Irrigation Project and modernization of Manchanabele canal banks will further support dairy and silk farming.

The event was attended by Legislative Council member S. Ravi, Bamul Director P. Nagaraju, Greater Bangalore Authority President Ganakal Nataraju, and several other officials and cooperative leaders, celebrating the union's turnaround and ongoing modernization efforts.

## Mallikarjuna Taruna Sangha to celebrate 29th anniversary

**KALABURAGI**

Sri Mallikarjuna Taruna Sangha of Vidyanagar will celebrate its 29th anniversary along with a Kamadahana program on March 3 at 7:30 PM at Mallikarjuna Sam-udra Bhavan. President Shivaraja Andagi said the event will teach youth the real spirit of Holi, focusing on culture rather than mischief. Senior writer Dr. Swamirao Kulkarni will give a lecture on Holi traditions. Performances include a Holi song by Ashok Kale and a Potharaja dance by Vishwanath Thotnalli. Welfare Society lead-ers and youth members will participate, ending with the Kamadahana ritual. All are welcome.

*MP Brijesh Chowta said central incubation centers help SC-ST youth build business skills, urging schools and colleges to support them*

# Incubation centers key to creating SC-ST entrepreneurs: Chowta

**MANGALURU**

Mangaluru witnessed a signif-icant step toward empowering SC-ST youth on Sat-urday as the Prerana-2026 SC-ST Youth Entrepreneurship Conference was held at SDM Law School. The event, organized jointly by the SC ST Study and Devel-opment Trust and Bolpu Mangaluru, focused on encouraging young people from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to become entrepreneurs.

Speaking at the event, MP Brijesh Chowta said the central government is opening incubation centers to help SC-ST youth learn business skills and build successful ventures. "When our youth enter the mainstream economy, it strengthens the nation. Schools and colleges should support such programs to guide young minds," he added.

The conference was inaugurated by Prof. P.L. Dharma, Vice-Chancellor of SDM University, who emphasized that education can make SC-ST youth financially strong and ready to face challenges in society. He encouraged students to use every opportunity to grow and contribute positively.

Mangaluru South MLA Vedavyas Kamath reminded students about government programs such as Mudra loans and startup support schemes. He said these initia-tives make it easier for youth to start businesses and secure their future. C.G. Srinivas, head of the Bangalore Dalit Entrepreneurs Association, highlighted that around 6,000 Dalits have already benefited from subsidized loans and land res-ervations to start their own businesses, with many becoming successful crore-patis.

The conference also featured addresses by Pooran Verma, CEO of Ujire SDM Edu-cational Institutions, and Vadiraj of Samadhi Bangalore. A book showcasing in-spiring success stories of SC-ST entrepreneurs, authored by Mohanangaiah Swa-my, President of the SC ST Study and Development Trust, was released.

The program was compered by Disha Shetty, welcomed by Shivaprasad Kokkad, and the vote of thanks was proposed by Bharat Kumar. Students actively partici-pated in discussions, workshops, and motivational sessions, marking a strong push toward building an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth.

## Married woman killed, 2 children orphaned

**CHIKKABALLAPURA**

A 26-year-old woman, Tejaswini, was tragically killed by her lover, Sandeep, leav-ing her two minor children orphaned. Tejaswini had been living separately from her husband due to family disputes and was raising her three-year-old daughter and ten-year-old son while working at a local hotel.

Police reported that Tejaswini and Sandeep had developed a personal relationship after meeting at her workplace. A heated argument at a friend's home led Sandeep to stab her with a knife. Though initially treated at the hospital, compli-cations arose after she consumed alcohol instead of medication, causing infection and multi-organ failure, which led to her death. The heartbreaking incident has left the local community and family in shock. Her children are being cared for by relatives. Police have detained Sandeep and are investigating the case, emphasizing the dangers of volatile personal relationships and the need for community support in such tragedies.

## Three-wheelers to empower specially-abled citizens

**CHITRADURGA**

A motorized three-wheeler distribution program for specially-abled citizens will be held on March 2 at 10.30 am at the Zilla Panchayat premises in the city. The event is organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Labour Department, Transport Department, and the Department for Empowerment of the Disabled and Senior Citizens.

Planning and Statistics Minister and District Incharge Minister D. Sudhakar will inaugurate the program. Labour Minister Santosh Lad and several MLAs, MPs, and board chairpersons will attend. Chitradurga MLA K.C. Veerendra Pappy will preside over the function. Senior district officials will also be present as special in-vitees. The three-wheelers have been donated by local industries, including Prakash Sponge Iron and Power Pvt. Ltd, Moreshwar Agro Feeds Pvt. Ltd, Aravind Lim-ited, and Sneha Farms Pvt. Ltd. Officials said the initiative aims to improve mobili-ty, independence, and dignity for specially-abled beneficiaries across the district.

## Sheep, goat scheme applications open now

**CHITRADURGA**

The Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation has invited applications for the Sheep and Goat Unit Supply Scheme for 2025-26. Eligible beneficiaries under the Special Unit Scheme and Tribal Sub-Scheme can apply until March 7.

The scheme is open to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe wage laborers, agri-cultural workers, and rural residents interested in animal husbandry. Applicants must be between 18 and 60 years of age.

As per rules, 33.3 percent priority will be given to women and 3 percent to specially-abled persons.

Under the scheme, beneficiaries will receive 10 improved female sheep or goats and one ram or buck. The total unit cost is Rs. 1,00,000, with a government sub-sidy of 90 percent.

A total of 42 units have been allotted across the district, distributed among various taluks. Interested applicants can contact the Assistant Director or their respec-tive Taluk Veterinary Hospital for details and required documents.

## CPI ML slams centre over divisions

**RAICHUR**

Strong criticism was voiced against the Central and State governments at the First Raichur Taluk Conference of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Lib-eration held in the city on Saturday.

Inaugurating the conference, district secretary Nagaraj Poojar alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre is promoting communal feelings and creating divisions in society. He also accused the State government of sup-porting capitalist policies that, he said, are hurting workers and common people.

Poojar expressed concern over rising prices of essential commodities, stating that many families are struggling to manage daily expenses. He criticized the repeal of old labour laws and the introduction of four new labour codes, claiming that working hours have effectively increased from eight to twelve hours in some sec-tors. He said it is worrying that women are being made to work night shifts for low wages.

He further alleged that subsidies for farmers have been reduced and that cases of atrocities against Dalits, oppressed communities, and women continue. According to him, emotional issues related to religion, caste, and nationalism are being high-lighted to divert attention from basic public concerns.

## Practical learning drives innovation in technology

**TUMAKURU**

Emphasising the need for hands-on experience, Dr. Chandrashekar P. K., Technical Expert at ABB Global Industries, said practical knowledge among students is the true path to innovation in new technologies. He was speaking at the Industry Linkage Lecture Programme organised by the IEEE Power Electronics Society and the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) at GP Nexus in Sri Siddhartha Technical College.

Dr. Chandrashekar highlighted the importance of strong cooperation between in-dustry and academic institutions. He said such partnerships play a key role in en-hancing students' practical skills, encouraging innovation and improving employ-ability. According to him, industries expect graduates not only to understand the-ory but also to apply knowledge effectively in real-world situations.

During his address, he shared insights into the latest developments in electricity and automation, along with information about job opportunities and emerging future trends in the sector. He explained that bridging the gap between classroom learning and practical exposure is essential for career success.

The lecture offered students a clear understanding of industry expectations and guided them on preparing for future challenges. Faculty members also received valuable inputs on strengthening collaborations and launching joint academic-industry initiatives. The programme was attended by EEE department heads Dr. N. Pradeep and Dr. Rajesh Kamath B., IEEE advisors Dr. Yogananda B. S. and D. V. Venugopal Chauhan, along with students.

**NAME CHANGE**

I, **YOUSUFF SHARIFF**, resident of No.003, Elegant Smiths Crest Appt, Harries Road, Benson Town Post Bengaluru-560046, have changed my Minor Son's name from **MOHAMMAD MOOSA SHARIFF** to **MOHAMMAD MOOSA KALEEM ULLA**, vide affidavit dated: 26.02.2026, before Notary N.NAGAPPA, Bengaluru.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

## Forest department launches wild elephant capture operation

**RAMANAGARA**

In response to the rising number of wild elephants in the Channapatna–Ramanagara region, the Forest Department has initiated a capture operation in-volving six elephants. The operation, starting near B.V. Halli village in Channapat-na, targets elephants named Sugriva, Kanjan, Dhananjaya, Harsha, Ishwara, and Ayyappa.

Officials began the operation with prayers for the animals, following standard protocols for humane treatment. The Department of Forests, led by Deputy Con-servator of Forests Ramakrishnappa, plans to track the elephants using drones and administer anesthetics to safely capture them. Authorities emphasized that the operation aims to prevent human–elephant conflicts while ensuring the safety of both animals and local residents.

## Devanahalli school owner faces POCSO charges

**DEVANAHALLI**

In a chilling case, Devanahalli police booked a residential school owner Dhananjay (A1) and his wife Shailaja (A2) under POCSO Act for allegedly sexually abusing mi-nor girl students in their 700-student hostel. Parents' complaint revealed two victims endured prolonged night-time harass-ment. Dhananjay allegedly entered girls' rooms, sometimes drunk, or summoned them to the warden's room for abuse. When victims confided in Shailaja, she re-portedly shielded her husband, warning them against disclosure.

The couple allegedly confined the girls for eight days, blocking family contact through intimidation and mental torture. On February 27, victims secretly reached parents, prompting an immediate police complaint.

FIR details systematic predation within school premises, raising alarms about oversight in private residential institutions. Dhananjay also leads an unaided schools association, amplifying public outrage. Police launched investigations, recording statements and securing evidence. The case underscores vulnerabilities in hostels meant to nurture children, sparking demands for stricter private school monitoring.

Community leaders condemned the betrayal of trust, with parents demanding thorough probes and school closure pending safety verification. Authorities as-sured swift justice while counselling affected families.

QUICK READ

## Cops seek custody of milk adulteration accused

**TIRUPATI**

Police have requested five-day custody of Addala Ganeswararao, accused in the suspected milk adulteration case, for questioning, said DSP Dev Kumar. Forensic, veterinary, food safety, and pathological reports are awaited. Special teams are probing the case. Eleven patients remain on ventilators and dialysis, while medical camps continue monitoring affected areas. Blood and urine samples have been sent to IIT Tirupati for nephrotoxin testing. Officials believe milk adulteration is the likely cause, pending scientific confirmation.

## Cong finalises 45 candidates for Assam polls

**GUWAHATI**

The Congress has finalised 45 candidates for the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, keeping most sitting MLAs. The formal announcement may wait until the BJP releases its list. The decision came after a CEC virtual meeting reviewing state feedback and screening reports. Discussions included new Binnakandi and Khowang seats and possible ally allocations. Some protests occurred over seat-sharing in Sarupathar and Bhawanipur-Sorbhog. The 126-seat elections are expected in April.

## JNUSU demands release of arrested students

**NEW DELHI**

The JNUSU demanded the release of 14 students arrested during the recent "Long March" to the Ministry of Education. Despite being granted bail, procedural delays have kept them in Tihar Jail, said general secretary Sunil Yadav. He alleged police action and campus barricades caused injuries and aimed to suppress dissent. Three office bearers are among those detained, and verification of permanent addresses is delaying their release, the union added.

# Invest, innovate to realise Viksit Bharat dream: PM

'The collaboration between government, industry, and knowledge partners turns policy announcements into real outcomes'

**NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on industry and financial institutions to boost investment and innovation to achieve Viksit Bharat.

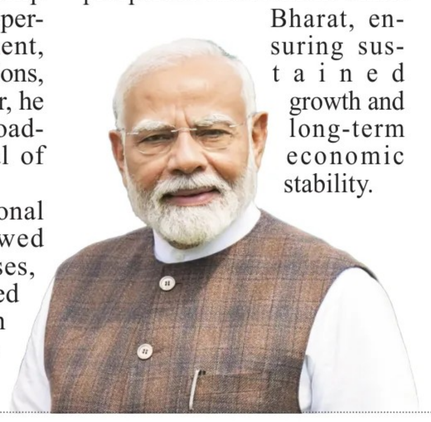
Addressing a post-Budget webinar on 'Technology, Reforms and Finance for Viksit Bharat', Modi emphasized that collaboration between government, industry, and knowledge partners turns policy announcements into real outcomes.

Highlighting infrastructure growth, he noted public capital expenditure rose from ₹2 lakh crore eleven years ago to over ₹12 lakh crore in the 2026-27 Union Budget, sending a strong signal for private sector investment.

The Prime Minister urged India Inc to make full use of Budget announcements with fresh investments and innovative initiatives. Financial institutions, he added, should design practical solutions to enhance credit flow and strengthen investor confidence. He stressed that India's progress over the past decade stems from conviction-driven reforms, not chance, and that government efforts to simplify processes have improved the ease of doing business.

Modi proposed the creation of a 'Reform Partnership Charter' to formalize cooperation between government, industry, financial institutions, and academia. This charter, he said, would serve as a roadmap to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Pointing out that national budgets are often viewed through short-term lenses, Modi emphasized the need to evaluate the Union Budget based on long-term policy impact and structural changes. He reiterated that reforms, when implemented collaboratively, can translate policy into tangible achievements, and that investment, innovation, and practical solutions from all stakeholders are critical for India's journey toward a developed nation. Through strategic partnerships, robust investment, and targeted reforms, Modi conveyed that India can realize its vision of a prosperous and resilient Viksit Bharat, ensuring sustained growth and long-term economic stability.



**Be architects of 'Viksit Bharat': VP**

At Delhi University's 102nd convocation, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan urged over 1.2 lakh graduates to become architects of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, emphasizing research, innovation, and entrepreneurship rooted in Indian realities yet globally competitive. Highlighting women's achievements, he noted over 70% of gold medallists were women. He also encouraged lifelong learning, staying away from drugs, and making India proud while aspiring to place DU among the top global universities.

# Kejriwal should fight like Rahul: Kharge

**NEW DELHI**

**Kharge said Kejriwal should follow Rahul Gandhi's example in tackling injustice, warned against Modi's policies, and accused Punjab's AAP government of being BJP's "B team."**

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge criticized Arvind Kejriwal's emotional display outside court, urging him to fight injustice like Rahul Gandhi, not with tears.

At Congress' Kisan Mahachaupal in Barnala, Kharge referred to Kejriwal's breakdown after being discharged in the Delhi Excise Policy case.

He said crying or wailing "won't get the job done" and stressed that a virtuous person doesn't need to claim honesty—the people recognize it. Kharge compared Kejriwal's behavior to how Prime Minister Narendra Modi used to speak, calling both "fraud" and hypocritical, and warned that following them would harm the country.

Kharge also attacked Punjab's AAP government, labeling it the BJP's "B team." He highlighted rising crime in the state, noting bullets fired, murders, and assaults on women while the government remained silent. He emphasized that Punjab, known for social justice and harmony, is being neglected and failing to protect its citizens.

Targeting PM Modi, Kharge criticized the US-India interim trade deal, calling it a "surrender" and accusing Modi of selling the country. He noted that India agreed to reduce tariffs on US industrial and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains, red sorghum, soybean oil, tree nuts, and wine. Kharge warned that the Punjab government is following BJP policies and ignoring the struggles of farmers, laborers, and youth, further undermining unity in the state.

Kharge concluded that fighting injustice requires action, not emotional displays, urging leaders to emulate Gandhi's persistent approach and focus on the welfare and unity of the nation.

*The US-Israel Operation Roaring Lion struck Iran, prompting missiles and airspace closures; Congress urged citizen safety*

# Cong condemns US-Israel strikes against Iran

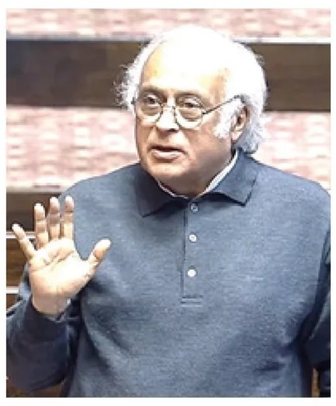
**NEW DELHI**

Congress condemned the recent US-Israel military strikes on Iran and urged the Indian government to ensure the safety of Indians in West Asia.

Congress MP and General Secretary Jairam Ramesh criticized US President Donald Trump, calling nuclear negotiations with Iran a "charade." He said the strikes were provoked by Israel, aiming for regime change.

Ramesh urged the Centre to take urgent steps to end hostilities and protect millions of Indians living and working in the Middle East.

Earlier, Congress Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi emphasized the escalating conflict between US-Israel and Iran and called on the Indian government to act immediately to safeguard citizens.



He stressed that their safety must be the top priority amid rising tensions.

The joint military operation, codenamed Operation Roaring Lion, targeted Iranian military sites, missile facilities, and areas near Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's office.

In response, Iran launched missile strikes against a US base in Bahrain. Israel declared a nationwide state of emergency, moving hospitals underground and activating sirens, while Iran, Israel, and Iraq closed their airspace, suspending flights.

The strikes follow disruptions in nuclear deal negotiations between the US and Iran.

US President Trump warned Iranian forces to surrender or face "certain death," framing the operation as an opportunity for citizens to challenge their government. Brigadier General (retd) Amir Avivi, founder of the Israel Defence and Security Forum, predicted the Iranian regime would struggle to withstand the combined military force.

Congress urged immediate diplomatic engagement to de-escalate tensions and called on the government to protect Indian citizens from the growing regional conflict, stressing that safeguarding lives should remain India's highest priority.

## Anxiety rises in Kashmir amid Iran tensions

**SRINAGAR**

Growing Israeli airstrikes on Iranian sites have caused deep anxiety in Kashmir, with families worried about the safety of Indian students, doctors, and professionals in Iran.

Former J&K chief ministers Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah urged students to follow the Ministry of External Affairs advisory and leave Iran while flights and airspace were available. Though many returned, several students and professionals remain stranded.

Dr. Mohammad Momin Khan, national representative of the All India Medical Students Association (AIMSA), called for close coordination between Iranian authorities, universities, and the Indian Embassy. He stressed the need for clear advisories, emergency helplines, and a comprehensive evacuation plan in case the situation worsens. AIMSA also formally appealed to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to act swiftly to protect Indian nationals.

## TN reports 1.18 cr young voters

**CHENNAI**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has confirmed that Tamil Nadu has around 1.18 crore young voters, with 3,060 assistant electoral registration officers deployed to enroll them ahead of the Assembly elections.

The ECI shared the report after reviewing election preparedness on February 26-27 across all 234 assembly constituencies, including 188 general, 44 SC, and 2 ST seats. Data from the final electoral roll published on February 23 shows 12,51,742 first-time voters aged 18-19 and 1,05,31,653 electors aged 20-29.

Targeted campaigns, particularly in colleges, have been launched to integrate these young voters into the democratic process.

Following a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the roll since October 2025, Tamil Nadu's total electorate stands at 5,67,07,380, with female electors (2,89,60,838) outnumbering males (2,77,38,925). The roll also includes 7,617 third-gender voters, 67,056 service electors, and 2,530 centenarians.

A total of 75,032 polling stations are planned, with an average of 756 voters per station and a strict cap of 1,200. For the first time, 100% webcasting will be implemented. Accessibility measures include home voting and specially managed booths for PwD and senior citizens.

Specialized booths include 258 women-managed and 265 model stations.

Technological initiatives via ECINET will provide e-voter cards, candidate details, and violation reporting in 23 languages.

Transparency measures include VVPAT verification, reporting within 72 hours, and memory verification of EVMs.

Officials are tasked with monitoring social media, preventing illicit campaign practices, and ensuring polling stations are safe and welcoming for all voters.

## Annamalai refuses to comment on Vijay's private life

**CHENNAI**

Former Tamil Nadu BJP president K. Annamalai said he would not comment on actor-turned-politician Vijay's reported legal issue, calling it a strictly personal matter.

Annamalai referred to media reports that a petition involving Vijay's wife Sangeetha was filed in a Chengalpattu court in December but only recently became public. He stressed the matter should remain between Vijay, his wife, and the judiciary. "I see this as an issue between Vijay, his wife, and the court. It concerns their personal life. I do not want to politicise it," he said. However, he clarified that he would respond to Vijay's political statements when required.

HEALTH FIRST

# *Guj launches HPV vaccination drive*

**GANDHINAGAR**

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched a statewide HPV vaccination mega campaign from Sola Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad, aiming to protect adolescent girls from cervical cancer. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the nationwide drive virtually from Ajmer, Rajasthan.

Minister of State for Health Praful Pansheriya highlighted that under PM Modi's leadership, Gujarat has remained polio-free since 2007. Vaccines that once required import are now indigenously produced, reflecting India's growing medical self-reliance and embodying 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. He emphasized that no one should die due to lack of medicines or financial constraints, noting that treatment coverage under the Ayushman Card has been doubled from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh.

The campaign targets around 5.50 lakh girls aged 14 to 15, providing the HPV vaccine free of cost. While a single dose costs approximately ₹3,000, the Gujarat government has allocated ₹150 crore to make the vaccine completely free under the Universal Immunisation Programme. Pansheriya urged parents to avoid misinformation and superstition, stressing that the vaccine is scientifically tested and administered under medical supervision.

Cervical cancer, the second most common cancer among Indian women, is primarily caused by HPV-16 and HPV-18. To ensure effective delivery, 2,297 trained vaccination teams and an equal number of cold chain points have been set up, with storage facilities maintaining temperatures between +2°C and +8°C. Real-time monitoring is enabled via TeCHO+ and SAFE-VAC portals.

Officials including Ahmedabad Mayor Pratibha Jain, Additional Chief Secretary Rajeev Topno, and other dignitaries attended the event. The government urged all parents to vaccinate their 14-year-old daughters and secure a healthier, cancer-free future.

The campaign reflects Gujarat's commitment to public health and preventive care, combining scientific innovation, government support, and public awareness to protect the next generation.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

**1. Aggregate Amount** : Total Rs.10,000 crore. **1.** Rs.2,000 crore 13-Year Tenure. **2.** Rs.2,000 crore 7-Year 6-Month Tenure. **3.** Rs.2,000 crore 8-Year 6-Month Tenure. **4.** Rs.2,000 crore 11-Year 6-Month Tenure. **5.** Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.47% SGS 2036.
**2. Method of Issue** : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
**3. Date of auction** : March 2, 2026

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in.**

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department
DIPR/CP/5889/Zen/2025-26

Government of Karnataka
**The Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Hassan Division, Hassan.**
No. EE/PWD/HSN/A.E-3/2025-26/ DATED: 26.02.2026

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION NO: 36/2025-26, Dated: 06.02.2026 POSTEPONEMENT Dated: 26.02.2026**

Tender is invited by the Public Works Department on behalf of the Governor of Karnataka, as per Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000, Standard Tender Document vide Tender notification No-36/2025-26 Dated: 06.02.2026, sl no-13 work is postponed and the last date of receipt of tender is 13.03.2026 till 4.00pm. For more details visit https://kppp.karnataka.gov.inor contact this office through Phone No. 08172-268437 or in person during office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD,
Hassan Division, Hassan.
ವಾಸಾಸಂ೨/ಹಿಸನಿ/ಹಾಸನ/1126/ಕೆಎಸ್ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
(Govt. of Karnataka)
ಕಾವೇರಿ ನೀರಾವರಿ ನಿಗಮ ನಿಯಮಿತ,
ಜಲಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ ಇಲಾಖೆ,
ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಇಂಜಿನಿಯರ್ ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಹೇಮಾವತಿ ಬಲದಂಡೆ ನಾಲಾ ವಿಭಾಗ. ಹೊಳೆನರಸೀಪುರ, ಹಾಸನ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ–573211
**Office of the Executive Engineer, Hemavathy Right Bank Canal, Division, Holenarasipura, Hassan District-573211**
ದೂ.: 08175-273238 e-mail: eehrbchnp@gmail.com
Phone: 08175-273238

**Short term Tender Notification No. 05/2025-26 Dated: 25.02.2026**

Item rate tender is invited through Karnataka Public Procurement https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal only for the below mentioned work in two cover system as per KW-4 by the Executive Engineer, Hemavathy Right Bank canal Division, Holenarasipura Hassan Dist., Karnataka State on behalf of the Managing Director, Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Limited, Bangalore from the eligible Contractors of KPWD/CPWD/ Other Public Sector Organizations and should have registered their names in the CNNL, Mysore/Bangalore as category II and above. The details of events are below. 1.Tender processing charges (in Rs.) : Refer as per e-Procurement. 2.The contractor can have access to e-tender document from 25.02.2026 to 05.03.2026 up to 4.00 pm. 3.A Pre-bid meeting is convened on 27.02.2026 at 11.30 AM in the office of the Chief Engineer, Hemavathy project Gorur. All the queries will be answered in the pre-bid meeting 4.Cover–I (Technical bid) will be opened in the office of Executive Engineer, CNNL, Hemavathi right bank canal division Holenarasipura on 07.03.2026 at 11.00 AM. 5.Cover –II (Financial bid) will be opened only after approval of Technical bid on 09.03.2026 on words. 6.No. of work : 01 Work 7.Nature of work: Building & Road works 8.Cost of works: Cost of Rs.185.71 lakhs 9.EMD : The prescribed format EMD declaration, as per Govt., order fd675exp-12/2020 Bangalore dated: 22.12.2020 10.Class of Contractor: Class II and above. Note:-1)The under signed reserves right to reject or accept the tenders at any time without giving any reasons. 2)The amount put to tender is subject to variation and the details of tender can be had in the Karnataka Public Procurement portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in and also during office hours. 3)The bidder should upload the necessary documents as per the pre-qualification criteria vide bid document in e-portal.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, CNNL, HRBC
Division, Holenarasipura-573211.
ವಾಸಾಸಂ೨/ಹಿಸನಿ/ಹಾಸನ/1125/ಕೆಎಸ್ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

## QUICK READ

### Delhi-Tel Aviv flight diverted to Mumbai

**NEW DELHI**

Air India diverted its Delhi-Tel Aviv flight AI139 to Mumbai on Saturday due to the closure of Israeli airspace. The closure follows Israel's attacks on Iran, affecting flight operations in the region. The airline said the decision prioritized passenger and crew safety and apologized for the inconvenience. IndiGo is also monitoring developments and ready to adjust flights. Flight tracking website Flightradar24 reported multiple airlines are impacted by the restricted airspaces. Passengers are advised to check flight status before departure.

### Punjab cops bust cross-border drug smuggling

**CHANDIGARH**

Punjab Police arrested 10 people after uncovering two cross-border drug and arms smuggling modules, officials said. Investigations showed the accused were in contact with Pakistan-based smugglers via social media. Authorities seized 5.438 kg of heroin, three pistols, 34 live cartridges, and Rs 4,500 in drug money. The network distributed drugs and weapons across India. Multiple FIRs were filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and the Arms Act. Further investigation is ongoing to dismantle the entire network.

### Ex-DG gets TMC candidature for RS

**KOLKATA**

West Bengal BJP leader Dilip Ghosh alleged former DGP Rajeev Kumar rewarded by TMC for loyalty during crises.

Ghosh on Saturday claimed that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee nominated Rajeev Kumar for a Rajya Sabha seat as recognition for "being with her in all crises." Asked about Kumar, who retired as West Bengal's director general of police on January 31, hosh said it is the TMC's prerogative to choose its nominees for the Upper House elections."But people like Rajeev Kumar were very useful for Mamata Banerjee. In all crises and in running the administration, he has been with her, so he had to be rewarded," Ghosh added. Kumar had previously been at the centre of a high-profile standoff between the state government and central agencies.

# Rs 22,516 cr semiconductor plant off to a 'power'ful start

The project, approved under India's Semiconductor Mission, began groundwork in September 2023

**SANAND**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sanand on Saturday, holding a lively roadshow before a significant industrial event. PM Modi arrived at Ahmedabad airport around 3:40 pm and drove straight to the Sanand GIDC area. Large crowds gathered along the route to see him, waving and cheering as his motorcade passed.

Eyewitnesses noted the high turnout, reflecting strong public interest. Security personnel managed the crowd, while officials coordinated traffic to ensure smooth movement for both participants and onlookers. Following the roadshow, PM Modi attended the inauguration of a major semiconductor facility by Micron Semiconductor Technology India Private Limited. The Assembly, Test, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP) plant was built with a total investment of Rs 22,516 crore and is among the largest technology investments in India to date.

The facility will convert advanced semiconductor wafers into finished memory and storage products such as DRAM, NAND flash, and solid-state drives, which are crucial for data centers, consumer electronics, and artificial intelligence applications. Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and senior Micron executives were present at the inauguration. PM Modi addressed the gathering, highlighting the plant's role in strengthening India's semiconductor ecosystem and manufacturing ambitions. The project, approved under India's Semiconductor Mission, began groundwork in September 2023. Once fully operational, the facility will feature about 5,00,000 square feet of cleanroom space, making it one of the largest of its kind globally.

Around 2,000 workers are currently employed, with expectations that direct employment may reach 5,000 as production expands. Company officials emphasized inclusive hiring practices, offering opportunities to skilled individuals from diverse backgrounds.

The inauguration marks a key milestone in India's technological growth, reflecting the country's push toward self-reliance in semiconductor manufacturing and strengthening its global presence in advanced technology sectors.

# Rahul demands funding, tax relief for veterans' pensions

**NEW DELHI**

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman requesting increased funding for the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) and full income tax exemption on disability pensions.

He described the taxation of disability pensions as "insulting," emphasizing that injured servicemen deserve recognition, not additional financial burden. Gandhi noted that the proposal in the Finance Bill 2026 taxes disability pensions for soldiers who remain in service, a first since 1922.

In his letter, Gandhi highlighted serious ECHS funding shortages. He said over ₹12,000 crore in medical bills are pending, budget allocations are nearly 30% below requirement, and hospitals are withdrawing services due to non-payment. Veterans are forced to pay out of pocket or delay treatment for critical illnesses like cancer. Gandhi stressed that those who served the country are feeling neglected in their hour of need.

He further pointed out that the ECHS is designed to provide the best healthcare for veterans and should receive adequate financial support. The Congress leader stated that a delegation of ex-servicemen had personally brought the issue to his attention, sharing feelings of being let down by their own government.

**He described the taxation of disability pensions as "insulting," emphasizing that injured servicemen deserve recognition, not additional financial burden**

Gandhi urged the Finance Ministry to clear all pending ECHS liabilities and ensure proper budgetary support. He also called for the restoration of full income tax exemption on disability pensions, arguing that pensions for injuries sustained in service should not be treated as taxable income. Highlighting the selfless service of disabled soldiers who continue in duty, Gandhi said it is "insulting to tax what should be praised."

A copy of the letter was also sent to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Gandhi concluded by appealing to the government to provide veterans the respect, support, and financial security they rightfully deserve, emphasizing that these steps reflect a grateful nation's duty to its armed forces.

*Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu demand strict action and speedy justice following the murder of a two-year-old girl*

# TVK PMK blasts DMK over Krishnagiri child murder

**CHENNAI**

The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), led by actor-turned-politician Vijay, strongly condemned the alleged sexual assault and murder of the child in Krishnagiri district. TVK described the act as "heinous and unforgivable" and demanded swift legal action against the accused. The party alleged that the suspect had been a union-level organiser in the youth wing of the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and questioned whether individuals with political backing feel above the law. TVK criticised the deteriorating law and order in Tamil Nadu, claiming that people associated with the ruling party were acting without fear of consequences.

It urged the State government to allow the investigation to proceed without political interference and demanded that the case be transferred to a fast-track court. The party also called for the maximum punishment if the accused is found guilty. Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) president Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss also condemned the crime, pointing out that the arrested suspect was a DMK youth wing functionary. He claimed that crime rates, including sexual assaults, murders, and robberies, had increased since the DMK returned to power. Dr. Anbumani accused ruling party members of acting as if they had been given a "licence" to commit crimes and criticised the government for failing to act despite earlier statements promising strict measures. He further cited rising crimes against women and children, as well as increased narcotics circulation, and stressed that the government must ensure public safety. The incident has sparked widespread political outrage, with opposition parties intensifying criticism of the DMK over law and order issues in the State.

## Himanta lunches BJP's Jan Ashirwad Yatra

**DHEKIAJULI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has launched the BJP's Jan Ashirwad Yatra to connect with voters ahead of Assembly elections.

Sarma inaugurated the state BJP's outreach campaign from Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district on Saturday, seeking public support to secure a third consecutive term for the party. Accompanied by state party president Dilip Saikia, Union Minister Pabitra Margherita, and other senior leaders, the Chief Minister led the procession atop an open van, waving to cheering crowds. People lined roadsides, greeting him with traditional scarves and flowers.

Addressing the gathering, Sarma recalled past electoral milestones, saying, "In 2014, you reposed faith in Narendra Modi ji and elected him as Prime Minister. In 2016, the public formed the first BJP government in Assam under Sarbananda Sonowal.

# Tripura Assembly budget session from March 13

**AGARTALA**

The Tripura Assembly will hold its budget session starting March 13, with Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu addressing the House.

Officials said the Governor's address will mark the opening of the ninth session of the 13th Tripura Assembly. The full schedule and business of the session will be finalised at a Business Advisory Committee meeting on March 6. During the session, a new Speaker may be elected following the death of sitting Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen on December 26 last year. Assembly Secretary Amiya Kanti Nath said the formal process for electing a new Speaker has not started, and no official notification has been issued yet.

Political sources suggest several BJP MLAs are likely contenders for the post. Tribal leader Ram Pada Jamatia, elected from the Bagma constituency in Gomati district, is considered a frontrunner. The BJP has not officially announced its candidate. Sen, a four-time MLA, passed away at the age of 72 in Bengaluru after over four months of medical treatment. Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy will present the Budget for the 2026–27 financial year during the session. While the Budget is usually presented on the opening day, the final decision will be taken at the March 6 committee meeting. This will be the third Budget of the BJP-led government's second term. The Budget is expected to increase allocations for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), as the 28-member tribal body is likely to go to crucial polls in March or April. Officials said the session will also focus on legislative work and discussions related to development, governance, and welfare initiatives across the state.

# Manjhi reminds NDA about RS promise

**PATNA**

Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) leader Jitan Ram Manjhi has reminded the NDA of a previous commitment regarding a Rajya Sabha seat.

Amid seat-sharing talks for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, Manjhi said, "I am not angry, but we were told we would get two Lok Sabha seats and one Rajya Sabha seat. It was said to be written in stone. However, we received only one Lok Sabha seat. We thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for that." He added that while he is not demanding the Rajya Sabha berth, the promised seat should be honoured.

"If you want to give, that's fine; if you don't want to give, that's fine too. But you had promised, and I will always maintain that promise," he stated.

A total of 37 Rajya Sabha seats across the country are up for polls, including five from Bihar. The terms of three NDA MPs and two Grand Alliance MPs are ending. To win one seat, the NDA requires 41 MLAs, but winning all five would need 205, making the fifth seat.

# Kerala govt sets up helpdesk for Gulf expatriates

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Kerala moves quickly to support Gulf expatriates amid rising Iran-Israel tensions and missile strikes.

Amid escalating hostilities between Iran and Israel, the Kerala government has set up a dedicated helpdesk to assist Malayali expatriates in West Asia.

The action comes after a US-Israel strike on Iranian targets triggered a major retaliatory missile barrage from Tehran. Reports said Iran launched around 30 missiles at Israel, prompting the Israeli Air Force to activate its air defence systems. Explosions were also reported in Bahrain, home to the U.S. Fifth Fleet, raising fears of a wider regional conflict.

Precautionary measures followed across the Gulf, with Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE temporarily closing airspace amid security alerts. Iran warned that U.S. and Israeli bases in the region could be potential targets, increasing concern for the large Indian diaspora. Kerala has a substantial population working in Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, employed across healthcare, construction, retail, and financial sectors. The safety of these expatriates is critical both for families and Kerala's remittance-driven economy.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan instructed the Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) Department to establish the helpdesk.

## NCP recasts Ajit Pawar legacy after bank case closure

**MUMBAI**

The closure of the Rs 25,000 crore MSCB scam case allows NCP to reshape Ajit Pawar's legacy and political narrative.

The special court accepted the closure report in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam case, clearing the name of former Deputy Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar posthumously.

The decision comes a month after Pawar's death in a plane crash at Baramati on January 28. Nearly 70 individuals, including Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar and MLA Rohit Pawar, also benefit from the ruling, marking the end of a decade-long legal battle.

Senior NCP leaders described the timing as "coincidental but symbolic," noting the verdict allows Sunetra Pawar to lead the party without the shadow of Enforcement Directorate or Economic Offences Wing investigations over her family. Another senior leader said the party can now present Ajit Pawar's legacy as one of "persecution" rather than "corruption."

The case involved alleged irregularities in loan disbursements between 2007 and 2011 to sugar factories and spinning mills.

**SHOW OF UNITY**

# *Imam asks mosques to open doors for Attukal pongala*

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

As Attukal Pongala approaches on March 3, Kerala's Muslim community has extended a warm invitation to Hindu devotees. Palayam Imam V P Suhaib Maulavi called for mosques and Muslim homes to be opened to visitors, ensuring drinking water, food, and resting facilities.

In a speech that quickly went viral, Maulavi said, "Attukal Pongala is just some days away. It is associated with a different faith, so we do not participate in the festivities, but we can be hosts to the many guests arriving in Thiruvananthapuram." He added that this year, the festival coincides with Ramadan, emphasizing the shared spirit of joy, fraternity, and love.

The cleric urged the community to show hospitality and brotherhood by welcoming devotees into mosques and homes, offering support and comfort. "Arrangements should be made for their rest. Our mosques and homes should be opened to them. This is an occasion to openly demonstrate our love and brotherhood," he said.

Social media users praised the gesture as a symbol of Kerala's unity and harmony. Many shared the video of Maulavi's speech, calling it the "real Kerala story," highlighting how compassion transcends religious boundaries. Amid debates over the upcoming film 'The Kerala Story 2,' the Imam's words reminded residents of the state's longstanding tradition of interfaith respect and hospitality.

Netizens commented on the video, saying, "It is our duty to welcome them. We should open our homes and mosques for them to rest." The initiative reflects Kerala's spirit, where faiths meet, kindness flows, and humanity shines brighter than any tradition, making the festival not just a religious occasion, but a celebration of unity and mutual respect.

QUICK READ

## Tram derailment in central Milan kills 2, hurts 40

**Milan**

A tram derailment in central Milan left two people dead and about 40 injured. The incident occurred on Vittorio Veneto Street, near the Central Station, when one of the city's newest tram models went off the tracks and crashed into a shop window. Emergency services dispatched 13 ambulances, while civil protection teams set up tents to assist the injured. Azienda Trasporti Milanesi (ATM) expressed shock and sympathy for victims, and said it is cooperating with authorities to investigate the cause of the accident.

## Greece issues shipping alert amid Middle East tensions

**Athens**

The Greek Shipping Ministry has advised all Greek-flagged vessels to exercise extreme caution and avoid the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Strait of Hormuz after recent U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran. Officials warned of heightened navigation risks across these waters and the North Arabian Sea, urging operators to implement maximum security measures and remain alert in Israeli ports. The advisory cited potential escalation to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, including missile, drone, electronic interference, and navigation system disruptions. Crews must remain highly vigilant.

# US-Israel strikes ignite middle east crises

Explosions were reported in Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, raising fears of a wider conflict

**WASHINGTON**

The United States and Israel launched major air and sea strikes on Iran on Saturday, marking a dramatic escalation in Middle East tensions. US President Donald Trump said the operation aimed to remove what he called an "imminent threat" and prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

The Pentagon named the campaign "Operation Epic Fury." According to officials, the first wave mainly targeted senior Iranian leaders and security officials. An Israeli official claimed Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian were among the targets, though their status was unclear. Iranian sources said several Revolutionary Guard commanders were killed, but this could not be independently confirmed.

Iran responded by launching missiles and drones toward Israel and warned that U.S. bases in the region were within reach. Explosions were reported in Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, raising fears of a wider conflict. Gulf oil-producing nations are on high alert as tensions threaten global energy supplies. Flights across the Middle East were cancelled, and long queues formed at banks and fuel stations in Iran as citizens prepared for uncertainty.

Trump urged Iranians to stay safe but also encouraged them to "take over" their government once the strikes end. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the attack would help create conditions for change in Iran.

The confrontation follows failed nuclear talks between Washington and Tehran earlier this week. Diplomatic hopes now appear dim as both sides signal readiness for further action.

The situation remains tense, with military operations expected to continue for several days, raising global concerns over stability, oil markets, and civilian safety.

## Iran must never be allowed to develop nuclear weapons: UK

**LONDON**

Britain has stated that Iran must never be permitted to develop nuclear weapons and emphasized its readiness to defend national interests following recent U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iranian targets.

A UK government source confirmed that Britain did not participate in the attacks. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is set to convene an emergency COBRA meeting on Saturday to assess the situation.

"Iran must never be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon, and that is why we have continually supported efforts to reach a negotiated solution," a government spokesperson said. The UK has bolstered its defensive capabilities in the Middle East as part of commitments to the security of its allies and stands ready to protect its interests.

While stressing the importance of preventing further escalation, the spokesperson highlighted Britain's priority on the safety of its nationals in the region and assured consular support for citizens.

In response to the evolving situation, the UK issued a travel advisory advising against all travel to Israel and the Palestinian territories, updating its previous guidance issued on Friday against non-essential travel to these regions.

Britain continues to monitor developments closely and has reaffirmed its commitment to regional stability and diplomatic solutions to prevent nuclear proliferation.

## Lebanon PM warns against risky escalation

**BEIRUT**

Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has warned against dragging the country into dangerous regional conflicts, urging restraint amid rising tensions following strikes on Iran.

In a statement issued after Israel and the United States carried out attacks on Iranian targets, Salam referred to the "serious developments" unfolding across the Middle East. He called on all Lebanese groups to act with wisdom and place national interests above external agendas.

Without naming the group directly, his remarks were widely seen as an indirect message to Hezbollah, the Iran-backed armed movement that has fought multiple conflicts with Israel. Hezbollah was formed in 1982 with support from Iran's Revolutionary Guards and remains a powerful political and military force in Lebanon.

"I reiterate that we will not accept anyone dragging the country into adventures that threaten its security and unity," Salam said, stressing the importance of preserving stability.

His warning comes amid reports that Israel has cautioned Lebanon it would respond forcefully if Hezbollah becomes involved in any wider U.S.-Iran confrontation. Previous fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, including a major conflict in 2024, resulted in heavy casualties and widespread destruction in Lebanon. During that war, longtime Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed, and significant portions of the group's arsenal were destroyed.

Observers say Lebanon's fragile political and economic situation leaves little room for another major conflict. Salam's statement underscores growing concern that escalating regional hostilities could destabilize the country unless restraint prevails among all parties.

## Pakistan faces growing youth drug crisis

**ISLAMABAD**

Pakistan is witnessing a serious rise in drug abuse and suicides among young people, raising concern among health experts and policymakers, highlights a deepening crisis affecting adolescents and young adults across the country.

A 2025 review of rehabilitation cases found that heroin accounts for 48 per cent of substance abuse among youth, while cannabis makes up 28 per cent. The study noted that 35 per cent of users began taking drugs during adolescence and 46 per cent were also diagnosed with depression.

A 2024 survey at University of Karachi revealed that 44 per cent of college students admitted to drug use, including 53 per cent of males and 31 per cent of females. Online purchase of drugs is also increasing, making access easier.

Suicide has reportedly become the fourth leading cause of death among Pakistanis under 30. Teenagers aged 15 to 18 are particularly vulnerable. Poisoning and hanging are the most common methods. Due to stigma and legal issues, official data remains limited.

According to estimates cited from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, nearly six per cent of Pakistan's population, around 6.7 to 7.6 million people, use drugs. About four million require structured treatment.

Experts say poverty, untreated mental illness and easy availability of drugs are major causes. They warn that unless urgent action is taken, the crisis will continue to grow silently and affect future generations.

## BNP faces challenge restoring judicial trust

**DHAKA**

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government, led by Tarique Rahman, has taken office with a strong parliamentary majority but faces a major challenge in rebuilding public trust in Bangladesh's judiciary.

According to an opinion article published in The Daily Star, the justice system in recent years has created growing public concern rather than confidence. Md. Arifujjaman, Deputy Solicitor under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, wrote that the new administration has inherited institutional weaknesses and public scepticism.

He stressed that restoring faith in the judiciary requires transparency, accountability and careful reform. Laws that allowed mass arrests and broad powers under national security or digital regulations must be reviewed to prevent misuse. He also said judicial appointments and disciplinary systems should remain free from political influence.

**Laws that enabled mass arrests and broad prosecutorial discretion, particularly under the guise of national security or digital regulation, must be carefully reviewed and refined to prevent abuse.**

Arifujjaman noted that cases seen as politically motivated may need fair and principled review. He cautioned political leaders against commenting on ongoing investigations, saying such actions weaken public confidence.

Despite holding a two-thirds majority in parliament, he argued that legal changes alone cannot restore belief in justice. Public trust, he said, must be earned gradually through consistent and impartial application of the law.

He concluded that if the government ensures courts remain independent and free from partisan pressure, it will strengthen Bangladesh's democratic foundations and reaffirm that justice serves all citizens equally, not the powerful alone.

## Cuba details arms seized after clash

**HAVANA**

Cuban authorities said a group of armed exiles who tried to enter the island by speedboat carried nearly 13,000 rounds of ammunition along with rifles and pistols before a deadly clash at sea.

Officials in Havana stated that 10 Cuban nationals travelling from the United States entered Cuban waters on Wednesday and opened fire on a border guard vessel. Cuban forces returned fire, killing four of the attackers and wounding six others, who were later detained.

Senior officers from the Interior Ministry displayed 12,846 recovered rounds of ammunition, 13 rifles and 11 pistols on state television. They said the firefight took place at a range of about 20 meters after the attackers first opened fire from a greater distance.

According to authorities, the group departed from Marathon in the Florida Keys on two boats but abandoned one due to technical problems. They allegedly planned to target military units and create unrest. Colonel Victor Alvarez accused the infiltrators of attempting to incite disorder and violence against the Communist-led government.

## UN alarm over deported Uyghur men

**GENEVA**

United Nations experts have voiced deep concern over 40 Uyghur men deported from Thailand to China last year, saying their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

The experts said Thailand sent the men back on February 27, 2025, reportedly under strong pressure from Beijing. They stressed that the deportations were carried out without applying the international legal safeguard known as the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to places where they may face serious harm.

According to the UN experts, the men had been held for more than a decade at Bangkok's Suan Phlu Immigration Detention Centre in poor conditions and without contact with their families or lawyers. They warned that the deportations exposed the men to possible enforced disappearance, torture and even arbitrary deprivation of life.

The statement said families have received no reliable or verified information about whether their relatives are alive, where they are being held or in what condition. The experts described the situation as part of a broader pattern of transnational repression targeting ethnic and religious minorities viewed as critical of the Chinese government.

## Pak-Taliban clash as talks intensify

**KABUL**

Fighting between Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban forces entered a third day on Saturday, raising fears of a wider regional conflict even as diplomatic efforts gathered pace.

Pakistani officials said strikes targeted Taliban military posts in Kabul and Kandahar, marking one of the deepest incursions into Afghanistan in recent years. Islamabad has accused the Taliban of sheltering militants from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who it says are carrying out attacks inside Pakistan. The Taliban denies the charge and called the strikes a violation of Afghan sovereignty.

Pakistan described its military action as a response to cross-border assaults. Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said the country's "patience has overflowed," warning of further retaliation if attacks continue.

Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani said the conflict would be costly and claimed Afghan forces were defending their territory. Both sides reported heavy casualties, though figures remain unverified.

International concern has grown. The European Union and the United Nations called for immediate de-escalation and dialogue. China and Russia also urged restraint. A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State said the United States supports Pakistan's right to defend itself against attacks but hopes tensions do not escalate further.

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi reportedly discussed easing tensions with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

## SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

BIG WIN FOR MILEI

## *Argentina clears historic labour reform*

**BUENOS AIRES**

Argentina's Senate has approved a major labor reform backed by President Javier Milei, delivering one of the most significant legislative victories of his administration.

The bill passed with 42 votes in favor, 28 against and two abstentions, clearing the way for it to become law. Milei's government says the reform will encourage investment, promote formal employment and strengthen confidence in Argentina's economy.

Supporters argue the changes are key to advancing Milei's free-market agenda, which has focused on stabilizing the exchange rate and reducing inflation. Monthly inflation has slowed sharply in recent months, earning praise from the International Monetary Fund.

However, labor unions and opposition lawmakers strongly oppose the reform, saying it weakens worker protections. One of the most controversial measures creates an employer-financed severance fund using contributions currently directed to the national pension system. Critics warn this could strain pension resources and make layoffs easier.

The law also relaxes hiring rules, modifies vacation policies, allows the standard workday to extend from eight to 12 hours and permits salaries to be paid in foreign currency.

Unions have staged protests, including a nationwide strike, objecting particularly to new limits on the right to strike that require essential services to maintain minimum operations during work stoppages.

Analysts say the Senate vote signals that Milei has enough political backing to push forward broader economic reforms, even as debates continue over the social impact of his policies.

QUICK READ

## Gold, silver prices likely to surge as Israel-Iran war escalates

**New Delhi**

Gold and silver prices are expected to open sharply higher on Monday as escalating tensions between Israel and Iran push investors towards safe-haven assets, market experts said on Saturday. Experts believed that rising uncertainty following Israel's preventive strikes on Iran could drive investors towards gold and silver, boosting prices further. Tehran was rocked by massive explosions on Saturday after Israel launched what it described as preventive missile strikes against Iran, dramatically escalating tensions in the region. Against this backdrop, analysts said the rising war buzz is expected to fuel uncertainty in financial markets.

## India's GDP growth expected to further advance in Q4 FY26

**New Delhi**

India's growth is expected to advance in Q4 FY26 further as has been evident form the high frequency indicators, according to economists, as India's GDP growth has been revised upwards to 7.6 per cent form the previous estimate of 7.4 per cent for FY26, based on the old series. Overall, we foresee the limited impact of the change in the new series, with no durable bearing on fiscal ratio. With this, we continue with our forecast of 7-7.5 per cent growth for FY27, said Jahnavi Prabhakar, economist, Bank of Baroda.

## Pentagon shuns Anthropic, picks OpenAI in its classified network

**New Delhi**

The United States Department of Defense has decided to deploy OpenAI's artificial intelligence models on its classified network, even as it distances itself from Anthropic over disagreements on AI safety and military use, OpenAI chief Sam Altman said on Saturday. Altman confirmed the development, saying the company has reached an agreement with the Pentagon to move forward with the deployment. In a post on X, Altman said OpenAI's discussions with the Department of Defense showed deep respect for safety and a shared goal of achieving the best possible outcome.

# India's rise from fragile 5 to global powerhouse

Union Minister highlights economic transformation, innovation surge, and roadmap toward Viksit Bharat by 2047.

**NEW DELHI**

Union Minister of State Dr. Jitendra Singh on Saturday said that India's remarkable journey from being grouped among the 'Fragile Five' economies in 2014 to becoming the world's fourth largest economy marks a decisive shift in national confidence, capability, and direction.

Delivering the P Parameswaran Memorial Lecture in Thiruvananthapuram, the minister asserted that India is firmly on course to become the third largest global economy in the near future and achieve the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Dr. Singh pointed out that in 2014 India was ranked 81st in the Global Innovation Index, but has since climbed to the 38th position, reflecting the country's growing emphasis on research, technology, and entrepreneurship. He emphasized that the transformation is not merely statistical but structural, driven by policy reforms and a strong push for innovation-led growth.

Highlighting the success of the startup ecosystem, the minister said India now has over two lakh startups generating more than 21 lakh jobs across sectors. Recalling the launch of the Start Up India initiative in 2015, he noted that the concept was initially unfamiliar to many, but has since evolved into a nationwide movement fostering enterprise and innovation. Nearly half of these startups are emerging from tier 2 and tier 3 cities, indicating balanced regional growth, while a significant proportion are women-led enterprises.

Dr. Singh also observed that the discourse on women empowerment is undergoing a meaningful shift, with women scientists and innovators leading some of the country's most prestigious national missions in space, science, and governance. On research and intellectual property, he said India now ranks sixth globally in patent filings, with more than 60 per cent of applications filed by resident Indians.

India is also among the leading nations in scientific publications, with a growing number of highly cited research papers. Thousands of Indian scientists feature among the top two per cent globally, underscoring international recognition of India's scientific talent.

The minister added that policy reforms have opened new avenues for private sector participation, resulting in rapid expansion of the country's space economy. Indigenous capabilities in defence manufacturing and advanced technologies have strengthened considerably, contributing to rising exports and enhanced self-reliance.

He further stated that exploration of marine resources, deep-sea minerals, and biodiversity will significantly contribute to future economic value addition. Emphasizing the role of young citizens, Dr. Singh said that the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' will ultimately be shaped and realized by the youth of today.

# Global oil prices to rise as US-Israel launch massive attack

**TEHRAN**

'Any disruption in the narrow maritime passage could significantly impact global energy supplies'

Global oil markets are bracing for a sharp rise in crude prices following the massive combat operation launched by the United States and Israel against Iran, a move that has pushed the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz into the centre of a growing conflict zone.

Analysts warn that any disruption in the narrow maritime passage could significantly impact global energy supplies.

The Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, handles more than 20 per cent of the world's oil shipments. With heavy missile exchanges reported in the region and US President Donald Trump stating that the annihilation of Iran's navy is a key objective of the military campaign, concerns are mounting over the safe passage of oil tankers through the corridor.

Market experts believe oil prices will incorporate a war premium reflecting heightened geopolitical risks. The coordinated strikes by the United States and Israel mark a major escalation in tensions, with Tehran launching retaliatory attacks, raising fears of a prolonged confrontation that could unsettle global energy flows.

On Friday, oil markets had already reacted to rising tensions. Brent crude settled 2 per cent higher at $72.48 per barrel, driven by supply concerns and uncertainty over potential disruptions. Analysts suggest that further escalation could trigger a sharper spike.

Barclays said in a note that Brent crude could climb to around $80 per barrel in the event of significant supply disruption. The bank noted that while markets are currently pricing in geopolitical risks, an escalation does not automatically translate into immediate supply shortages. However, the risk of disruption remains elevated given the scale of military operations.

Energy economists point out that even without a direct blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, shipping delays, insurance surcharges, and heightened security risks could add to costs, pushing global crude benchmarks upward.

Meanwhile, a senior Indian official said that India has strengthened its energy security in recent years by diversifying oil imports beyond Gulf suppliers. A substantial portion of India's crude now comes from countries outside the Strait of Hormuz route, reducing vulnerability to potential chokepoints in the region.

Despite diversification efforts, analysts caution that as a major oil importer, India remains exposed to global price fluctuations. A sustained spike in crude prices could have implications for inflation, fuel costs, and fiscal balances worldwide, as markets closely monitor developments in the volatile Middle East.

# ICICI Prudential Life Unveils Dividend Leaders 50 Fund

**MUMBAI**

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched the Dividend Leaders 50 Index Fund under its Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs), designed for investors seeking stability and long-term wealth creation. The fund focuses on fundamentally strong companies with a proven history of consistent dividend payouts.

Mr. Manish Kumar, Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited, said, "The Dividend Leaders 50 Index Fund provides customers a disciplined, transparent approach to equity markets by investing in financially robust companies with a consistent dividend record."

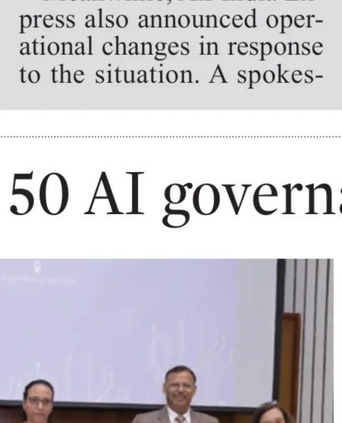
The fund's strategy is built on four key pillars: selecting stocks with strong dividend payouts, performing quality checks for solid financials and stable cash flows, diversifying across multiple sectors, and following a transparent, rule-based investment process with regular reviews and rebalancing. This approach enables investors to remain confident, knowing their portfolio is anchored in time-tested companies.

The fund tracks the BSE 500 Dividend Leaders 50 Index, comprising 50 companies from the broader BSE 500 that have consistently paid dividends over the past decade. Rebalanced annually, the index historically delivered annualized total returns of 33.63% over three years, 30.96% over five years, and 20.40% over ten years as of January 30, 2026. While the fund adopts a passive, index-mirroring approach, regulatory constraints may occasionally result in minor tracking deviations.

Available through popular ULIP plans including ICICI Pru Signature Assure, ICICI Pru SmartKid Assure, and ICICI Pru Smart Insurance Plan Plus (SIP+), the Dividend Leaders 50 Index Fund combines long-term wealth creation potential with life cover. For details, visit www.iciciprulife.com.

# AI suspends Middle East flights amid escalating conflict

**NEW DELHI**




Air India on Saturday announced the suspension of all its flights to destinations across the Middle East following rapidly escalating tensions in the region. The move comes in the wake of coordinated military operations launched by the United States and Israel against Iran, significantly intensifying geopolitical instability.

In an official statement, Air India said, In view of the developing situation in parts of the Middle East, all Air India flights to all destinations in the Middle East have been suspended. The airline emphasized that passenger and crew safety remains its top priority. It added that it will continue to closely monitor the evolving security environment and adjust operations proactively as required.

The airline assured that its teams are extending all necessary assistance to affected passengers. Travelers have been advised to check their flight status online and contact the airline's 24×7 call centres at +91 1169329333 and +91 1169329999 for updates. You are also requested to check our website. Thank you for your patience and understanding, the statement added.

The suspension follows reports that the United States and Israel began what they described as major combat operations targeting Iran. The coordinated attacks have sharply escalated tensions in the Middle East, raising fears of a broader regional confrontation with potential global geopolitical and economic ramifications, including disruptions to air travel and oil markets.

Meanwhile, Air India Express also announced operational changes in response to the situation. A spokesperson for the airline stated that all westbound international flights have been suspended as a precautionary measure.

The safety and security of our guests and crew remain our highest priority, the spokesperson said. The airline confirmed that it is closely monitoring the situation and will proactively review and adjust operations as necessary. Impacted passengers are being directly notified through their registered contact details.

Air India Express has advised guests to check their flight status on its official website and ensure their contact information is up to date. For change and cancellation waivers on affected flights, passengers can visit the Manage Booking section online.

The developments underscore the far-reaching impact of geopolitical conflicts on global aviation, as airlines take precautionary measures to safeguard passengers and operations amid rising regional instability.

# AI will change jobs, not end them: Amazon CEO

**WASHINGTON**

Fears that artificial intelligence could lead to massive job losses may be exaggerated, according to Amazon CEO Andy Jassy. Speaking in a media interview, Jassy said AI is more likely to reshape the nature of work rather than completely eliminate employment opportunities.

Jassy acknowledged that many roles which have relied heavily on human labour for the past two to three decades may require fewer people in the future. However, he stressed that this does not mean jobs will disappear altogether.

Instead, new types of roles will emerge, just as they have during every major technological shift in history. I do believe that a lot of the jobs that we've thrown human beings at the last 20 or 30 years, you won't need as many human beings doing those same jobs. But I also think there will be other jobs created. And that has always happened in every technology shift, he said. Meanwhile, multiple reports also suggested that AI will reshape jobs, not destroy them.

Morgan Stanley in recent report suggested that the long-term impact may be less severe than many expect. While some roles will be automated, most workers are unlikely to be permanently left behind. Instead, many are expected to shift into new types of jobs, including roles that do not yet exist, the report stated.

To support its argument, Morgan Stanley pointed to major technological shifts over the past 150 years, including electricity, mechanised farming, computers and the internet. These innovations transformed industries and altered job requirements, but they did not replace human labour altogether.

While spreadsheets reduced the need for certain clerical tasks, they also enabled financial professionals to focus on more complex and higher-value work. Over time, this shift helped create new careers in finance rather than destroy the sector.

# NITI Aayog unveils frontier 50 AI governance roadmap

**NEW DELHI**

NITI Aayog has unveiled a comprehensive roadmap to operationalise Frontier Technologies across 50 Aspirational Blocks, marking a strategic transition from digital governance to intelligent AI-enabled governance in public policy.

The announcement was made in an official statement issued on Saturday following high-level deliberations at the Frontier 50 Workshop held under the Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme.

The workshop brought together senior policymakers and administrators, including Nidhi Chhibber, CEO of NITI Aayog, Prof Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, and officials from the Central and State Governments, along with District Magistrates. The newsletter Aspirational Times was also released during the event. Eight ministries showcased avenues for deeper digital integration in district-level decision-making, focusing on real-time data use and measurable governance outcomes.

In the health sector, the National Quality Assurance Standards framework has certified public health facilities through the SaQsham platform across 29 States and Union Territories, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms. Under POSHAN 2.0, the POSHAN Tracker now monitors more than 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres in near real time, transforming nutrition delivery into a data-driven governance system.

Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, rural tap water coverage has expanded through geo-tagged assets and pipeline mapping integrated with PM Gati Shakti. The initiative emphasises the leadership of District Collectors, Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs), and rigorous water quality testing to ensure sustainable outcomes.

Digital livestock governance through Pashu Aadhaar enables real-time vaccination tracking and the creation of AI-ready datasets for improved disease surveillance. Meanwhile, the Digital Agriculture Mission is building interoperable digital public infrastructure through AgriStack and Bharat Vistaar, integrating farmer registries, geo-referenced land maps, and multilingual advisory services to empower farmers with actionable insights.

In banking and financial services, artificial intelligence is being deployed to strengthen credit scoring, fraud detection, anti-money laundering compliance, Know Your Customer (KYC) automation, and monitoring of financial inclusion indicators.

The workshop also highlighted emerging needs such as assessments in borewell-dependent regions, improved API integration for seamless data exchange, enhanced POSHAN validation mechanisms, and augmented reality-based training modules for frontline workers.

Officials said the Frontier 50 initiative will function as real-world impact sandboxes, enabling evidence-based policy experimentation and scalable AI-driven governance models aimed at accelerating development outcomes across Aspirational Blocks.

# Mitchell, Mostary Win ICC Player Awards

## Daryl Mitchell and Sobhana Mostary clinched ICC Player of the Month honors for stellar performances

**NEW DELHI**

New Zealand's dynamic all-rounder Daryl Mitchell and Bangladesh's prolific batter Sobhana Mostary were named the ICC Players of the Month following their outstanding performances in international cricket. The duo's remarkable displays in November 2022 earned them global recognition, highlighting their impact on the international stage.

Mitchell was awarded the ICC Men's Player of the Month for November 2022 after surpassing India's Suryakumar Yadav and England's Joe Root, who were also nominated for the prestigious honor. The New Zealand star played a pivotal role during his team's ODI tour of India, where he delivered match-winning performances under pressure.

After New Zealand fell 0-1 behind in the three-match ODI series, Mitchell rose to the occasion with two consecutive centuries. He struck an unbeaten 131 in the second ODI, steering his side to a crucial victory to level the series. He followed it up with a commanding 137 in the third ODI, powering New Zealand to a formidable total of 337/8. His efforts ensured a 2-1 series triumph in challenging Indian conditions, marking a memorable comeback for the visitors.

Mitchell amassed 352 runs in the ODI series at an impressive average of 176, earning him the Player of the Series award. His exceptional run-scoring also propelled him back to the number one position in the ICC ODI batting rankings. He continued his fine form in the subsequent T20I leg, contributing 125 runs in five matches at a blistering strike rate of 186.56.

In women's cricket, Mostary's consistent performances at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Global Qualifier were instrumental in Bangladesh finishing unbeaten in the tournament. Her prolific run-scoring at the global event underlined her growing stature in international cricket and secured her the ICC Women's Player of the Month award, further cementing her place among the game's rising stars.

# Jammu & Kashmir Clinch Historic Ranji Title

**BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia hails J&K's maiden Ranji Trophy triumph as landmark moment.**

**JAMMU**

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Devajit Saikia has congratulated the Jammu & Kashmir cricket team for scripting history by winning their maiden Ranji Trophy title. Describing the achievement as a shining example of cricket's deep reach across the country, Saikia said the triumph reflects how the sport continues to flourish in every corner of India despite challenging circumstances.

Heartiest congratulations to the Jammu & Kashmir cricket team for winning its maiden Ranji Trophy at Hubli today. It is a classic instance of how well the game of cricket is spread across India despite challenging conditions, Saikia wrote on X, praising the team's resilience and determination.

Highlighting the importance of structured development and administrative backing, Saikia credited the BCCI's sustained efforts and the vision of its former secretary and current International Cricket Council (ICC) chair Jay Shah for laying the foundation of the team's success. He pointed out that a three-member sub-committee, established in June 2021 to manage cricket activities in the region, played a crucial role in nurturing talent and strengthening infrastructure. According to Saikia, this roadmap and long-term planning have been instrumental in making the historic victory possible.

Jammu & Kashmir sealed their memorable triumph at the Hubli Cricket Ground during the 2025–26 Ranji Trophy final against eight-time champions Karnataka cricket team. The team delivered a commanding performance, posting a massive 584 in their first innings. They then bundled out Karnataka for 293, securing a decisive 291-run first-innings lead that ultimately proved match-winning.

Under the leadership of Paras Dogra, J&K reinforced their dominance in the second innings, declaring at 342/4. Opener Qamran Iqbal starred with a marathon unbeaten 160, stitching together an unbroken century partnership with Sahil Lotra. Although the match concluded in a draw, Jammu & Kashmir were awarded the title on the basis of their overwhelming first-innings lead.

The landmark victory marks a new chapter for cricket in the region, underlining the success of sustained administrative support and the growing depth of talent in Indian domestic cricket.

# South Africa Eye Seventh Straight Win

**NEW DELHI**

South Africa will aim to extend their unbeaten streak in the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup when they face Zimbabwe in their final Super Eights fixture at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

The Proteas have been the standout side of the tournament, winning all six of their matches and maintaining a formidable run rate of 10, the highest among all competing teams.

Led by captain Aiden Markram, South Africa have combined aggressive batting with disciplined bowling. Markram has been central to their success, scoring 264 runs at a blistering strike rate of 178 across six innings, including three half-centuries.

His strike rate of 200 in the powerplay phase is the highest among batters who have faced at least 50 deliveries during that period in this edition. The skipper is also closing in on a significant milestone — the record for most runs scored by a captain in a single T20 World Cup, currently held by Pakistan's Babar Azam, who amassed 303 runs in 2021.

South Africa's top order has provided consistent support, with Quinton de Kock and Ryan Rickelton delivering key contributions. The team's top three average 42.1 in the tournament, just marginally behind Zimbabwe's impressive 44.8. Against spin.

# Olympians Jinson Johnson, Anish Bhanwala TO headline 63rd Fit India Sundays on Cycle event

**NEW DELHI**

Olympians Jinson Johnson and Anish Bhanwala will be the main highlights of the 63rd Fit India Sundays on Cycle event on March 1. Johnson, a former India Olympian in 2016 and the national record holder in the 1500m with a time of 3:35.24, will join the cycling event at the picturesque RK Beach in Visakhapatnam.

Johnson won a gold medal in the 1500m and a silver in the 800m at the 2018 Asian Games. He also earned a silver in the 1500m at the 2022 Asian Games, establishing himself as one of India's most accomplished middle-distance runners. Olympian and 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medalist in 25m rapid fire pistol, Anish Bhanwala, along with accomplished fencer Taniksha Khatri, will participate in the cycling event in New Delhi.

The event is scheduled at the iconic Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex and is organized in collaboration with the Fire and Emergency Departments of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Bhanwala is a silver medallist in the Mixed Team event at the 2022 Cairo ISSF World Championships and secured a silver medal at the 2025 Cairo Championships. She also earned a bronze medal in the Team event at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou. Taniksha reached the quarterfinals at the 2022 Asian Games, marking India's best-ever performance in the Épée.

They will be joined by Nancy, an ambassador for Fit India, and Akanksha Tagotra, a well-known Zumba instructor and wellness coach.

Launched in December 2024 by Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya, Fit India Sundays on Cycle has become a significant mass movement, with over 25 million citizens participating across more than 250,000 locations nationwide.

# LUCY HAMILTON Nears Potential International Debut

**HOBART**

Uncapped teenage fast bowler Lucy Hamilton is edging closer to a potential international debut after being named in contention for the third and final ODI of the ongoing series against India. The Australia women's national cricket team are currently managing a growing injury list, prompting selectors to explore fresh options as they look to seal the series.

Australia hold a 6–4 advantage in the multi-format points-based contest following a commanding victory at Bellerive Oval on Friday. A clean sweep of the ODI leg in Hobart would ensure they retain the series trophy before attention shifts to the upcoming day-night Test in Perth. Hamilton, a promising left-arm quick, was added to the squad after injuries to Kim Garth and Ellyse Perry disrupted the bowling unit. The young pacer has been steadily increasing her workload in preparation for the longer format and was seen bowling extended spells in the nets during Friday's fixture. Her early call-up has accelerated her exposure to the national environment, with team management closely assessing her readiness for international cricket.

Australia selector Shawn Flegler confirmed Hamilton is firmly in the mix for Sunday's clash. That's one of the opportunities for us. We'll look at how things go today (in the second ODI) ... hopefully we get another win, and then that gives us an opportunity to have a look at Luce possibly in game three, Flegler was quoted as saying. He added that Hamilton's inclusion in the ODI squad came slightly earlier than originally planned but provides valuable experience around the group.

# We do not really care about the perfect game, says Will Jacks

**COLOMBO**

All-rounder Will Jacks believes England doesn't need a perfect game to lift the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup title.

Having sealed a semi-final berth with a thrilling last-over win over New Zealand in Colombo his fourth Player-of-the-Match award of the tournament Jacks made it clear that results, not perfection, were what mattered.

We've won six out of seven games and we've qualified for a semi-final. At the end of the day, no one really cares (about the perfect game).

We obviously want to play well in there, but we're not gutted that we haven't played the perfect game because we're winning. And that's T20 cricket, that's professional sport. It's also incredibly hard to do that.

You're playing against a very strong side who have prepared as well as you, and they know what they're trying to do and they're also trying to play the perfect game.

So the chances of that happening are very slim. What we've done well is, in the key moments, we've kept a calm and clear head and we've managed to negotiate those well.

Under Harry Brook's leadership, they have repeatedly found themselves in tricky positions, only for someone to step up.

# Gukesh loses to Van Foreest; Aravindh draws to Parham

**PRAGUE**

World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju suffered a shock defeat to Grand Master Jorden van Foreest on Saturday in round three of the 2026 Prague Chess Festival Masters. After the other games ended in draws, van Foreest moved into a four-way tie for first place with GMs Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Nodirbek Yakubboev, and David Navara.

Van Foreest now shares the lead, while Gukesh has fallen into a four-way tie for last place. However, there are still six rounds left, so it's very early in the tournament. Van Foreest suffered a tough loss to Anton in round two, but he can now celebrate victories over both top-seed GM Vincent Keymer and the world champion within just three rounds.

The Dutchman stated, Of course I'm super-happy! Not only is it my first win against a world champion, but also my first win against Gukesh. Even before he was world champion, I played him a couple of times, but I never won against him and he won against me several times. Van Foreest shared his thought process during the match: He was looking rather calm, and I was like, am I missing something? I didn't see it, so I thought I had to go for it.

# NEW GENERATION SHINES AT KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

**GULMARG**

From February 23 to 26, the snow-covered meadows of Gulmarg transformed into a high-altitude arena as they hosted the 6th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games.

While seasoned champions once again displayed their dominance on the slopes, the 2026 edition will be remembered for something more profound the unmistakable arrival of a fearless new generation of winter athletes.

Against the breathtaking backdrop of the Pir Panjal range, skiers, snowboarders, and ice sport athletes battled both competitors and the biting cold. The established heavyweights carved their familiar arcs across the powdery slopes, reaffirming their stature in Indian winter sports.

Yet, amid the expected medal tallies and podium finishes, it was the fresh faces who quietly stole the spotlight.

Teenage skiers attacked downhill courses with confidence beyond their years, matching seasoned campaigners turn for turn. In snowboarding events, youngsters displayed daring tricks and clean landings, earning applause from coaches and spectators alike.

Ice hockey rinks echoed with the energy of emerging players determined to challenge the established order.

# Wolves Beat Villa 2-0 In West Midlands Derby

## Joao Gomes scores first goal of season as Wolves secure rare win over Aston Villa

**WOLVERHAMPTON**

Wolverhampton Wanderers produced a spirited display to defeat local rivals Aston Villa 2-0 in the West Midlands derby, earning only their second win of the Premier League season and ensuring they will not go down as the worst side in the competition's history.

Joao Gomes opened his account for the campaign with a crucial goal, helping Wolves climb to 13 points from 29 matches.

The victory means they have surpassed Derby County's record-low tally of 11 points set during the 2007-08 season, a mark long associated with the poorest campaign in Premier League history. Despite remaining at the bottom of the table, Wolves' performance offered renewed belief and pride to their supporters at Molineux.

Villa, who remain third with 51 points from 28 games, missed the chance to strengthen their hold on a Champions League qualification spot. They are six points clear of fifth-placed Chelsea but have managed just three wins in their last 10 league outings, raising concerns about their recent form at a crucial stage of the season.

After a tightly contested first half played in driving rain that left the surface slick and difficult, Wolves broke the deadlock in the 61st minute with their first shot on target. Jackson Tchatchoua delivered a precise cross from the right flank, and Adam Armstrong's deft touch set up Gomes perfectly. From 15 metres out, the Brazilian midfielder calmly steered the ball into the net to spark celebrations among the home crowd.

Wolves continued to show resilience and discipline, defending stoutly while looking dangerous on the counterattack. Substitute Rodrigo Gomes sealed the result late in the match, finishing confidently to double the lead and underline the gulf between league positions did not reflect the balance of play on the night.

It was a very good performance, every player did well, said Wolves goalkeeper Jose Sa after the final whistle.

We have a lot of character, we will keep fighting game-by-game and see what happens.

# Nations Boycott Paralympics Opening Over Russia Participation

**AMPEZZO**

**Several countries to skip Verona ceremony protesting Russian and Belarusian inclusion under flags.**

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is facing mounting political pressure just days before the Paralympics open in Verona, as a growing list of nations plans to boycott the opening ceremony in protest at the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes under their national flags.

The escalating diplomatic row threatens to overshadow the start of the Milano Cortina Paralympics.

The IPC has allocated 10 combined slots to athletes from Russia and Belarus, permitting them to compete under their own flags and with their national anthems. The decision, taken in September 2025, has sparked controversy against the backdrop of Russia's four-year invasion of Ukraine, with critics arguing that allowing national symbols undermines international efforts to isolate Moscow.

Ukraine was the first to announce it would boycott the ceremony, signaling its opposition to the IPC's ruling.

The move has since encouraged other nations to follow suit. Finland confirmed that it will not attend the opening event, according to IPC Chief Brand and Communications Officer Craig Spence.

The Czech Republic, which had initially cited scheduling conflicts in December, later revised its position and declared it would also boycott the ceremony in protest.

Through media statements, Latvia, Poland and the Netherlands have likewise indicated they intend to skip the opening festivities. While none of these countries have withdrawn their athletes from competition, their absence from the ceremony sends a strong symbolic message of disapproval.

The IPC has defended its stance, maintaining that sport should remain neutral and inclusive, and that athletes should not be punished for the actions of their governments. However, the decision has reignited debate over the role of international sporting bodies in times of geopolitical conflict.

With the Games set to begin in Verona in a week, attention is increasingly focused not only on athletic competition but also on the broader political tensions surrounding the event. The controversy underscores the delicate balance sports organizations must strike between inclusivity and global accountability during periods of international crisis.

# Billie Jean King Defends Women's Team After Trump Joke

**WASHINGTON**

American tennis icon Billie Jean King has weighed in on the controversy surrounding the U.S. men's Olympic gold medal-winning ice hockey team after some players were heard laughing at a joke made by Donald Trump about the women's team, which also secured gold at the Milano Cortina Olympics.

During a Sunday phone call congratulating the men's team on their overtime victory over Canada, Trump invited the players to attend the State of the Union address and visit the White House. While acknowledging the women's championship success, he remarked, I must tell you, we're going to have to bring the women's team, you do know that? He then joked that failing to invite the women would likely lead to his impeachment.

Audio of the call indicated that several members of the men's team laughed at the comment, prompting swift backlash online from fans and commentators who viewed the remark as diminishing the women's achievement.

King, a 39-time Grand Slam champion across singles, doubles and mixed doubles, responded on social media platform X by underscoring the importance of leadership and respect. A longtime advocate for equality in sports and society, she wrote that character is demonstrated not only in public statements but also in private moments.

# Messi Knocked Down During Inter Miami Friendly Win

**MIAMI**

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi was knocked to the ground by a security guard while a shirtless fan attempted to embrace him during their 2-1 friendly victory over Ecuadorean champions Independiente del Valle in Puerto Rico on Thursday.

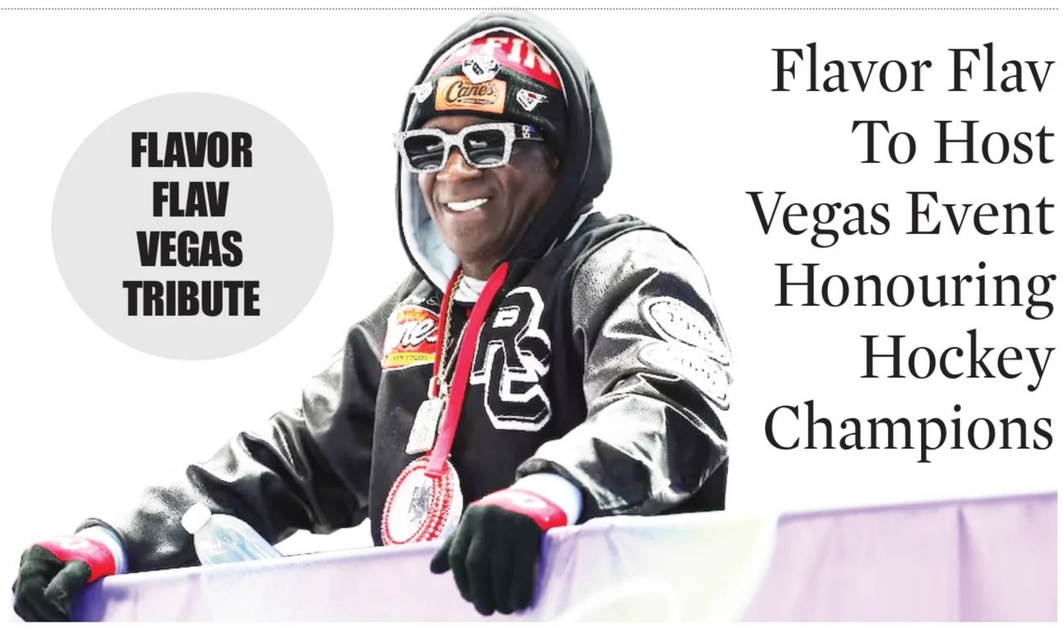
The incident occurred near the end of the match at Estadio Juan Ramon Loubriel in Bayamon. A fan ran onto the field and reached the centre circle, wrapping his arms around the two-time MLS Most Valuable Player.

As security intervened, a guard pulled the pitch invader to the ground but inadvertently dragged Messi down in the process.

Before the situation was brought under control, two other fans had also entered the field.

One, wearing a Barcelona jersey, managed to take a selfie with the Argentine icon, while another in an Inter Miami shirt had Messi briefly sign his jersey.

The chaotic scene unfolded despite visible security presence around the pitch. Messi, 38, quickly rose to his feet and appeared unharmed following the collision.




# Flavor Flav To Host Vegas Event Honouring Hockey Champions

**AMPEZZO**

Flavor Flav will host a special celebration in Las Vegas this July to honour the U.S. women's ice hockey team following their gold medal triumph at the Milano Cortina Olympics. The Hall of Fame rapper revealed plans for the four-day She Got Game weekend event, scheduled from July 16–19, in partnership with MGM Resorts International.

The announcement was made on social media platform X, where Flavor Flav shared details about the celebration and his broader effort to support female athletes. In his post, he said he had created a GoFundMe campaign after receiving numerous questions from fans about how to donate and contribute to the team's celebrations. He expressed hope that the initiative would have a lasting impact beyond the weekend festivities and provide continued support for women representing the United States at the highest level of sport.

Flavor Flav, a founding member of the pioneering hip-hop group Public Enemy, offered the 23-player squad a Las Vegas trip featuring dinners, entertainment shows, and what he described as a real celebration. He also shared what he said was a formal email invitation sent directly to the players, outlining the event's schedule and hospitality arrangements.

The event aims not only to celebrate the team's Olympic success but also to spotlight women's achievements in sports more broadly. Organizers indicated that additional female athletes may be honoured during the weekend, reinforcing the theme of empowerment and recognition.

Reuters sought comment from USA Hockey regarding whether the entire gold medal-winning roster plans to attend the Las Vegas celebration. However, the governing body did not immediately respond to requests for confirmation.The planned festivities underscore a growing movement among celebrities and corporate partners to elevate and invest in women's sports. With the backing of a major hospitality group and the promotional reach of a music icon, the July event is expected to draw significant attention while celebrating one of the most memorable achievements in recent U.S. Olympic history.

# U.S. Women's Hockey Team Noncommittal On White House Visit

**WASHINGTON**

The gold medal-winning U.S. women's hockey team declined to confirm whether it will attend a White House visit after Donald Trump suggested that such a celebration would take place soon.

Trump referenced the women's team's Olympic triumph while honoring the U.S. men's hockey team during Tuesday night's State of the Union address. The men's squad, which defeated Canada in overtime at the Milano Cortina Olympics, received a standing ovation from lawmakers and guests in attendance. Several members of the championship-winning team were present at the address, drawing applause for their achievement.

During the ceremony, Trump also announced that star goaltender Connor Hellebuyck would be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the nation's highest civilian honors. The recognition underscored the administration's praise for the men's team's dramatic gold medal victory. While the President noted that the women's team would also be invited to the White House, members of the gold medal-winning squad remained noncommittal when asked about a potential visit. Team representatives did not provide a definitive timeline or confirmation, indicating that discussions may still be ongoing.

The U.S. women's hockey program has enjoyed sustained success on the Olympic stage, capturing multiple gold medals and further cementing its legacy in international competition. Their most recent triumph added to a storied history that continues to inspire young athletes across the country.

The issue of a White House visit has gained added attention following recent comments by the President that sparked mixed reactions among players and observers. While some athletes have welcomed the recognition, others have emphasized the importance of focusing on their accomplishments rather than political developments.

For now, the women's team appears intent on celebrating its Olympic success while weighing any future ceremonial engagements. Whether the visit materializes in the near future remains to be seen, but the spotlight remains firmly on both teams' remarkable achievements at the Milano Cortina Games.

# Hilary Knight Criticizes Trump Remark After Olympic Wins

**MILAN**

Hilary Knight, captain of the gold-medal-winning U.S. women's Olympic hockey team, publicly criticized a comment made by Donald Trump following the U.S. men's Olympic hockey team's championship victory.

After the men's team secured gold, Trump invited them to attend the State of the Union address.

During his remarks, he added, I must tell you, we're going to have to bring the women's team, you do know that. He then joked that if he did not also welcome the women's team, I do believe I probably would be impeached.

While some members of the men's team reportedly laughed at the comment, Knight took a different view. Speaking on ESPN on Wednesday, she described the remark as sort of a distasteful joke, adding that it unfortunately distracted from the achievements of women athletes at the Olympics.

I thought it was sort of a distasteful joke, and, unfortunately, that is overshadowing a lot of the success, the success of just women at the Olympics carrying for Team USA and having amazing gold-medal feats, Knight said.

The U.S. women's hockey program has now secured three Olympic gold medals in its history, further cementing its dominance on the international stage.

This year also marked a rare double triumph for Team USA hockey, with both the men's and women's squads capturing gold at the same Games. Knight emphasized that the focus should remain on celebrating that historic accomplishment.

We're just focusing on celebrating the women in our room, the extraordinary efforts, and continue to celebrate three gold medals in program history, as well as the double gold for both men's and women's at the same time, she said. And really not detract from that with a distasteful joke.

# Medvedev Sets Up Dubai Final Against Griekspoor

**DUBAI**

Daniil Medvedev advanced to the final of the Dubai Tennis Championships, defeating top seed Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-2 in a commanding 83-minute semi-final performance. The victory keeps Medvedev on course to achieve a milestone that has eluded him throughout his decorated career — winning the same tournament twice.

The former world number one will face unseeded Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor in Saturday's final. A triumph would hand Medvedev his second Dubai crown, adding to his 2023 title at the tournament. Remarkably, despite collecting 22 career titles, each has come at a different event, underlining the rarity of a potential repeat success.

Medvedev arrived in Dubai with questions surrounding his form after early exits in Rotterdam and Doha. However, the third seed has rediscovered his rhythm in emphatic fashion, defeating Shang Juncheng, Stan Wawrinka, Jenson Brooksby and Auger-Aliassime all in straight sets en route to the final.

Against Auger-Aliassime, Medvedev delivered arguably his best display of the week, combining precision serving with relentless baseline pressure. He controlled the rallies from the outset, breaking serve at key moments and never allowing the Canadian to settle into the match.

It has been an amazing four matches, probably playing better and better each match, today being the best performance, Medvedev said after the semi-final.

# Yash and Kiara's 'TABAAHI' Poster Creates Buzz Online

The makers of the upcoming film Toxic have released the first poster of its new song 'Tabaahi'. The poster shows actors Yash and Kiara Advani in a close embrace near a dramatic ocean. The film is directed by Geetu Mohandas.

In the poster, Yash looks strong and calm as Kiara's character, Nadia, holds him tightly. A wild sea with high waves forms the background. Yash is seen holding a cigar, showing his bold and rugged character. The wind blows through Kiara's open hair, and she wears a simple white dress that flows in the air. Her soft appearance stands in contrast to Yash's intense look.

The song 'Tabaahi' will be released on March 2. Singer Vishal Mishra has given his voice to the track. The music is composed by Ravi Basrur, Vishal Mishra, and Tanishk Bagchi. Reports also say Tanishk Bagchi worked on one song with Arslan Nizami and Faheem Abdullah.

Fans have shared their excitement on social media. Many said they are eager to hear Vishal Mishra's soulful voice in the song.

Toxic is a gangster action drama set in Goa from the 1940s to the 1970s. The film also stars Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Rukmini Vasanth, and Tara Sutaria. It will release on March 19, clashing with Dhurandhar: The Revenge starring Ranveer Singh.

# DULQUER SALMAAN Builds Fortune Beyond Silver Screen

Dulquer Salmaan has evolved from a Dubai-based IT professional into one of Malayalam cinema's most bankable and highest-paid stars. The son of legendary actor Mammootty, Dulquer chose to pursue acting despite having a stable corporate career. Over the years, he carefully selected diverse and meaningful roles, earning praise across multiple industries including Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi cinema. His performances in Sita Ramam and Charlie strengthened his reputation as a versatile, pan-Indian actor.

As of 2025, reports estimate his net worth at over Rs 57 crore. He is said to charge between Rs 8 to 10 crore per film, with annual earnings exceeding Rs 10 crore through theatrical releases, endorsements, and OTT deals. Apart from acting, Dulquer heads Wayfarer Films, which has produced successful projects like Kurup and King of Kotha. He also owns luxury cars, premium properties, and continues expanding his cinematic footprint.

# RISHAB SHETTY SHARES HIS FAVOURITE ACTOR MEMORIES

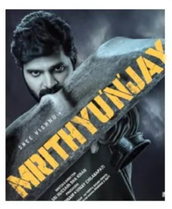
Actor and director Rishab Shetty recently opened up about his favourite actors and an interesting casting story about his hit film Kantara. Speaking at a press event in Kerala earlier this year, Rishab said his all-time favourite actor is the late Puneeth Rajkumar. He also expressed deep admiration for Malayalam superstar Mohanlal. Rishab said he feels a strong emotional bond with Mohanlal and considers him like a family member. He recalled meeting him at the Kollur Mookambika temple and sharing a photo from that special moment.

Rishab added that his favourite actor in Kannada cinema is Dr. Rajkumar, father of Puneeth Rajkumar. He said watching Mohanlal's films makes him feel proud, as if the actor belongs to his own family.

Rishab also revealed that Puneeth Rajkumar was once considered for the lead role of Shiva in Kantara. At first, Rishab planned to play the role himself. Later, he felt Puneeth would suit the character well, especially in the buffalo race scenes. However, he wanted Puneeth to learn the coastal Karnataka dialect for the role. At that time, Puneeth was busy with many projects, including Dvitva. Though he was excited about Kantara, his tight schedule made it difficult to join the film. Eventually, he advised Rishab to go ahead without waiting for him. Puneeth passed away on October 29 due to cardiac arrest. He was later honoured with the Karnataka Ratna award.

# Jr NTR Unveils Intense Mrithunjay Trailer Online

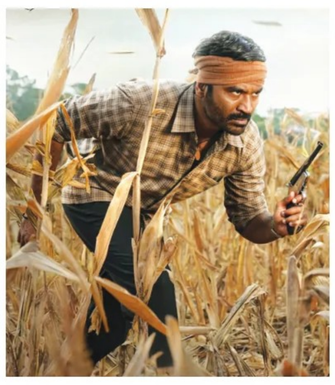
Popular Telugu star Jr NTR has released the gripping trailer of the upcoming thriller Mrithunjay, starring Sree Vishnu and Reba John. The film is directed by Hussain Sha Kiran and will hit theatres on March 6. Sharing the trailer on his X account, Jr NTR praised producer Sandeep Gunnam, also known as Sunny, for choosing unique stories. He said Sunny has a strong instinct for good scripts, much like his father, Gunnam Gangaraju. Jr NTR added that the trailer carries strong intensity and keeps viewers curious. The trailer opens with Sree Vishnu's character promising a child that he will untie the ropes binding his hands and answer all questions. He is later seen asking his superior for a posting in the crime bureau, but his request is rejected. This suggests that he plays a journalist eager to investigate crime cases.




# Dhanush's Kara Set For April 30 Release

Dhanush is gearing up for his big-screen return with Kara, an action entertainer directed by Vignesh Raja. The film is slated for an April 30 theatrical release, with the announcement made by producer Ishari K. Ganesh at VELS University's cultural festival. Backed by Vels Film International, the project was previously referred to as D54 before its official title reveal during Pongal.

The film stars Mamitha Baiju as the female lead, alongside K. S. Ravikumar, Jayaram, and Suraj Venjaramoodu. Written by Vignesh Raja and Alfred Prakash of Por Thozhil fame, the music is composed by G. V. Prakash Kumar. Dhanush was last seen in Tere Ishk Mein.



# *Rubaroo Song Reveals Dacoit's Tender Love Story*

The makers of Dacoit have released the first single, Rubaroo, offering a soft and romantic glimpse into the love story of Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur.

Though the film is described as a revenge action drama, the three-minute song focuses on the innocent beginnings of their relationship. The video shows sweet and simple moments shared by the lead pair, from casual meetings to happy times in local markets. Adivi Sesh's character is seen finding reasons to visit Mrunal's home, capturing the warmth of young love.

In the film, Adivi Sesh plays a convict who escapes from jail to seek revenge on his former partner, played by Mrunal Thakur. However, Rubaroo presents a different side of their story. In a dreamy sequence, his character remembers their early days together while sitting in confinement. Mrunal plays a character named Juliet. The Hindi version of the song is sung by Faheem Abdullah and Chinmayi Sripada, while the Telugu version features Bheems Ceciroleo and Chinmayi Sripada. Bheems Ceciroleo has composed the music and written the Telugu lyrics, while the Hindi lyrics are by Ritesh Rajwada. Directed by debutant Shaneil Deo, the film also stars Anurag Kashyap, Prakash Raj and Atul Kulkarni in key roles.

Dacoit will release in theatres on April 10, 2026, in Hindi and Telugu, with a Tamil dubbed version also planned.

# Deepika Padukone Shares Cryptic Post Amid Film Buzz

**Deepika Padukone shared a calm message amid The White Lotus rumors and buzz around Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar 2 release clash with Toxic**

Actress Deepika Padukone has shared a reflective post on Instagram amid reports linking her to The White Lotus 4 and the ongoing buzz around her husband Ranveer Singh's upcoming film Dhurandhar 2.

The post emphasizes calm and self-control, reading, Becoming calm is the loudest flex…Real power shows up when chaos hits, and you don't fold. She elaborated on the importance of mastering emotions, choosing control over impulse, and moving quietly while others panic. Deepika did not refer to any specific situation, but the timing of the post has sparked fan speculation that it could be a response to online trolling.

Deepika was invited to audition for The White Lotus 4 but reportedly declined. The news, combined with her cryptic note, has fueled conversations on social media. Meanwhile, her husband Ranveer Singh's Dhurandhar 2 is scheduled for a March 19 release, potentially clashing with the Toxic starring Yash. Theatre chains in Australia have already begun advance bookings, indicating the film may release as planned despite rumours of postponement to avoid a box-office clash.

Deepika's post has resonated with fans, who have praised her for promoting calmness and composure in the face of speculation and online chatter.

# Ranabaali Song Celebrates Vijay Rashmika Wedding Joy

Actors Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna tied the knot on February 26, 2026, in a grand ceremony held in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Ahead of their wedding reception, the makers of their upcoming film Ranabaali released the first song, Endhayya Saami, celebrating the couple's new journey.

The music video shows Vijay and Rashmika's characters entering their home after marriage. It traces their relationship from being distant to slowly falling in love. The song ends with a heartfelt message on screen wishing the couple a Happy Married Life. Fans have praised their chemistry, saying it feels natural both on and off screen.

The Hindi version of the track is titled O Mere Saajan. The film is directed by Rahul Sankrityan and marks the third collaboration between the two stars. Set in colonial India, the period drama also features several international actors. The music has been composed by the popular duo Ajay-Atul.

# BRUNO MARS ENDS LONG BREAK WITH NEW ALBUM

Pop superstar Bruno Mars has returned with his fourth solo studio album, The Romantic, ending a nearly 10-year break from solo music. The album was released on February 27 through Atlantic Records.

The nine-track album mixes retro-soul, disco and Latin-inspired ballads. It highlights Mars' well-known singing style and creative production skills. According to Billboard, the lead single I Just Might debuted at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, marking a strong comeback for the singer-songwriter.

Other songs on the album include Risk It All, which comes with a mariachi-themed music video. Additional tracks such as Cha Cha Cha, God Was Showing Off, Why You Wanna Fight? and Dance With Me have also gained attention. Many fans have described the album as a musical time machine that brings back the sound of the mid-1970s, including soft soul and Philly soul styles. Mars produced the entire album with his longtime collaborator D'Mile. Together, they created a smooth and unified sound across all songs. Special physical editions of the album are also available, including a velvet sleeve vinyl sold only on his official webstore and a limited numbered first pressing.

To promote The Romantic, Mars will begin a global stadium tour on April 10, 2026, in Las Vegas. The tour will include more than 70 shows across North America and Europe. Special guests will include Anderson .Paak, Victoria Monét and Raye.

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